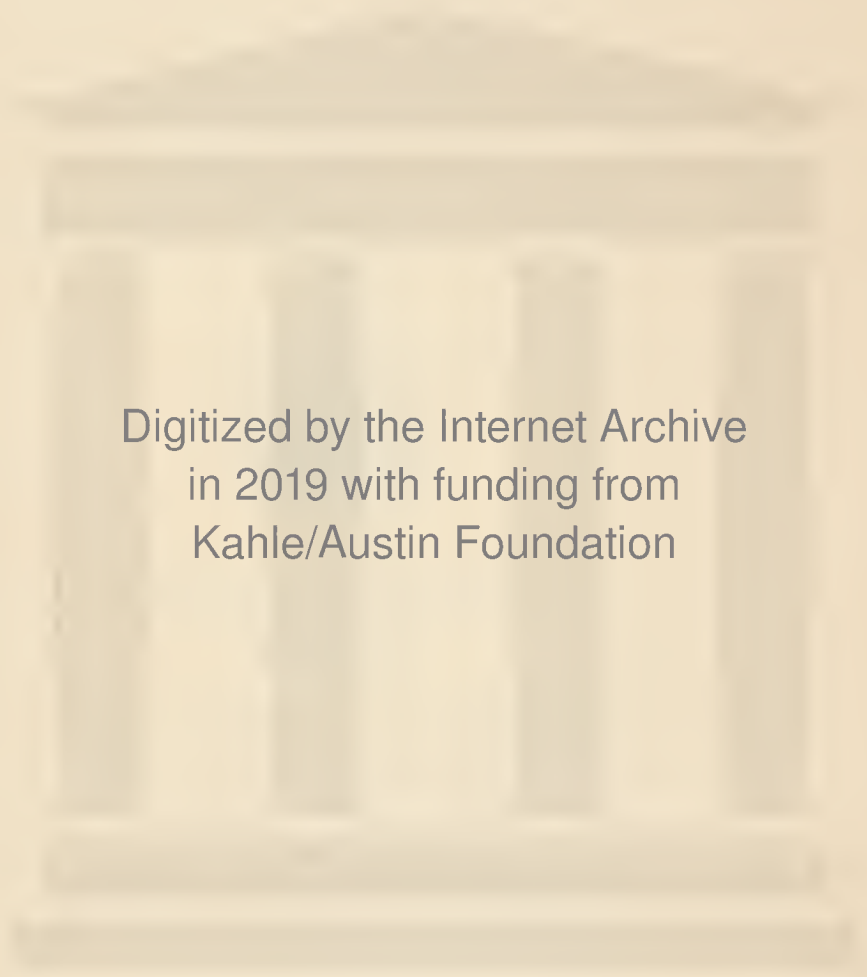


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THE LIVES OF THE RAKES

VOLUME VI

THE REGENCY RAKES

BY E. BERESFORD CHANCELLOR

THE LIVES OF THE RAKES

VOL. I.

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"OLD Q" AND BARRYMORE

VOL. VI

THE REGENCY RAKES: THE REGENT,
HERTFORD, HANGER, ETC.



KING GEORGE THE FOURTH.

(frontispiece)

THE LIVES OF THE RAKES

THE REGENCY RAKES

BY

E. BERESFORD CHANCELLOR,

M.A., F.S.A.



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FOREWORD

IN the following pages I have endeavoured to present a portrait of George, Prince of Wales, the Regent and the King, in which his well-known propensities as a rake are chiefly exhibited, but from which some of his more amiable and even attractive qualities are not entirely absent. The picture can hardly be said to be, on the whole, an engaging one—just as the character of the man was not, at any rate in the retrospect, an engaging one. But it is interesting as a study of human nature, and as such may appeal to those who might otherwise turn with disgust from an exhibition of selfishness and consistent self-indulgence. Those of the Regency Rakes, as it is convenient to call them, selected as examples, are such as had a personal and peculiar association with the First Gentleman of Europe; and help, I think, to complete a picture in which the Prince's figure is the outstanding one.

E. B. C.



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THE REGENCY RAKES

R.R.

A



CHAPTER I

GEORGE THE FOURTH

THERE has hardly been a figure in history whose character has given rise to so much contradictory criticism as that of George IV., whether we regard him as Prince of Wales, Regent, or King. There are those who see in him nothing but the selfish voluptuary, the oriental sybarite in terms of western manners and ideas, the heartless ruiner of innocence, and the unscrupulous panderer to his own carnal pleasures. Such are of the school of Thackeray, who would not allow of a single good trait in the man he abhorred, and of the persuasion of Charles Greville, who did his best still further to blacken the blots which obscure the royal features like some diabolical and malignant disease. Others there are who have done their best in a losing cause, and have attempted to gloss over defects and to heighten virtues (for our poor padded hero possessed certain virtues) to such an extent, that one, reading their *apologies*, begins to rub one's eyes and to ask oneself if some grievous biographical

errors have not been committed in respect of the first gentleman of Europe (as a humorist once called him), and if the man who has come to be looked at askance by Respectability, was not, after all, an injured and much misjudged saint in disguise.

And then there are those who seek a *juste milieu* between wholesale vituperation and unqualified praise: who try to get at the man as he really was without his wig and his frogged coats of later years, and his fascination and good looks of an earlier day. Those who do this, without the prejudice of enemies or the blindness of adulators, will, I think, find something to be said for him, as we know how much has been said against. They will remember not only his character but the character of his forbears; not merely his own way of life, but his upbringing; not alone his personal idiosyncracies but those of his parents; not solely his personal disposition and nature, but the nature and disposition of those by whom he was surrounded; not only his own way of life but the way of life of his contemporaries. They will, too, place among their *pièces justificatives* the temptations to which a young man, born into such a position as he, was liable and indeed inevitably exposed; they will even, when considering such things, be inclined to exaggerate somewhat the good qualities he did possess and exhibit, as against those many errors to which his high place

and unique environment made him a victim—even if it was a willing one.

The Prince has been uniformly censured by writers. Byron, as we all know, said some hard things about him, and in *Don Juan* and *Belshazzar*, *The Irish Avatar*, and above all in the concentrated fury and scorn of *The Windsor Poetics*, the poet has, again and again, held him up to obloquy. Leigh Hunt was, as everyone is aware, actually imprisoned for his remarks about the royal morals and perhaps still more for his remarks about the royal person, in which latter connection even Brummel found, it is said, the cause of his ultimate undoing.¹ There is, indeed, no gainsaying the fact that George earned for himself an unenviable notoriety, and undoubtedly merited much of the contumely which has become attached to his name.

And he has, so far as I remember, but one adequate apologist. Mary Stuart and Cæsar Borgia have, in company with many other misunderstood historical figures, been more or less whitewashed; even a good word has been said for Judge Jeffreys; but only one still small voice has been raised in mitigation of the heavy sentence the world has chosen to pass on George, Prince of Wales and King of England.

Even the Diarists have had their fling at the

¹ He compared his royal friend with one of Mrs. Fitzherbert's footmen, who was known as Big Ben, on account of his girth.

man who, after all, gave their records frequently the only spice and interest they possess, and Creevy is continually jeering at the 'Prinny' he was glad enough to dine with, and Charles Greville added a deep shade of bitterness to the bitter things he was accustomed to say of most people, when revealing royal secrets which many think he had no right to reveal.

George had an exuberant and almost an inordinate personality. There is no getting away from the fact. I think it is Mr. Max Beerbohm (his one apologist) who compares him, when Prince, with a young bull charging about in pursuit of pleasure; and the phrase felicitously describes that joyous, florid determination to get out of life all the fun and joy of which life (even when passed in a palace) is capable. For one born into a position on which the fierce light beats with almost blinding vividness, such a determination is fatal. Whatever he does is liable to be traced to some unruly passion; whatever he says is likely to be misconstrued; whomever he favours becomes at once suspect. And truth to tell George did and said things which only too clearly supported the blame showered upon him, and consorted with all kinds of people of both sexes whose acquaintance was anything but likely to improve his reputation.

Like many of his forbears he had an inordinate passion for women; like some of them he had

a marked love of gambling and drinking to excess. In fact he possessed to a very large measure those traits which had exhibited themselves in others of his race ; which, perhaps, would have exhibited themselves in those in lesser stations whose propriety and demureness have frequently resulted from lack of opportunity. As the Heir to the Throne, opportunity went hand in hand with every passion he chose to indulge. From his early manhood he was surrounded by those whose interest it was to pander to his passions and to obtain favour by their assiduity. Under such circumstances a young man might well be more than human who should withstand the blandishments of the fair and the praise of the witty ; and there resulted from this a sort of idea that whatever George, Prince of Wales, did, in his environment of flatterers and parasites, was well done ; whatever reprobation issued from the mouths of the judicious, was inopportune and uncalled for.

The prince thus gradually grew up in a false and vitiated atmosphere ; adverse criticism (and plenty of it found voice among those sections of society which, no doubt, Carlton House thought negligible) was never suffered to come between him and his headlong pursuit of pleasure ; and if he ever heard of discontent with his way of life, it was chiefly from the rather *bourgeois* master of Windsor, and those who were his counsellors,

rather than from the people whose blame or praise was really of more significance and account.

The consequences of such a way of life, disastrous to the prince's character as they were, were hardly so detrimental to him as another circumstance on which, I think, critics of his life have laid too little stress, I mean the attitude taken up by George III. and Queen Charlotte. That hereditary inability of the sovereign and the heir-apparent to see eye to eye on matters of policy and conduct came to a head in this instance ; and blameworthy as the prince no doubt was, and tactless as his advisers often showed themselves, there was a harshness and a lack of ordinary affection exhibited by his parents which, I feel certain, was responsible for much of his back-sliding.

The Farmer King and his plain-faced, haughty consort never seem to have realised that their eldest son, who combined in his person the graces and charm which they so lamentably lacked, was likely to want other amusements than what they themselves found in the formality of Windsor and the unsophisticated atmosphere of Kew. They seem to have forgotten that they themselves had been young (if, indeed, they ever had been) ; and in their horror of venial faults they unwittingly incited the wayward young man to other faults which were certainly not venial.

In due course politics (the curse of social life) entered the arena, to exacerbate still further their

uncongenial temperaments and to introduce that jealousy into the royal relations which drove them still further apart. Then came the catastrophic stroke which deprived the rather foolish and exceedingly obstinate, but withal *rusé*, monarch of reason; and the prince who had been kept alien from his father's counsels and policy, was called upon to be Regent, rather by necessity (as the King's advisers too palpably showed) than by choice.

And lastly, after a decade of sovereignty without kingship, George became an actual monarch. Disillusioned, bored by a life which had emptied already all its pleasures into his lap, become gross and fat by much indulgence, the exhausted voluptuary retired behind the walls of Windsor, hating the sight of any but a few chosen ones, finding a monotonous pleasure in daily drives among the retired roads where none might see him pass, lolling indolently on a sofa in the Chinese pavilion at Virginia Water, or in the overheated rooms of his exotic Brighton creation.

In a famous letter which he once addressed to George III., the Prince remarks: "In these unhappy times, the world, Sir, examines the conduct of Princes with a jealous, a scrutinizing, a malignant eye. No man is more aware than I am of the existence of such a disposition, and no man is, therefore, more determined to place himself above all suspicion."

Although this was said in one special connection, the reception it met with was common to every protestation or promise its writer made. The King either did not, or would not, believe in his son's sincerity on any subject whatever ; he treated all such expressions with suspicion ; and the more cogent they seemed, and the better expressed they were, the more certain he appeared to be of their falsity. He, no doubt, saw behind them the influence of those whose political views were in direct opposition to his own conception of government, and though the voice might have been that of his son, the hand was the hand of Fox or Sheridan. Not that the fact that the voice was the prince's would have had any influence with him. In fact just the reverse, for he had come to entertain so great a dislike for him that he would have sooner believed in the patriotism of Wilkes or Beckford than in the sincerity of his heir.

There were plenty of faults on the other side. George was headstrong, he was licentious, he was prodigal to an inordinate degree ; and if he possessed all the graces, he could boast of but few of those virtues by which his father set so much store. When he seduced Mary Robinson and married Mrs. Fitzherbert he seemed to be setting a crown of wrong-doing on a life of criminal laxity ; but what he really showed was that he had the courage of his opinions, or, perhaps one

should rather say, of his desires ; and in fulminating against his conduct the older George seems to have forgotten Hannah Lightfoot¹ and, for the occasion, to have overlooked Lady Sarah Lennox.

That the son acted in a way which might have tried the patience of a more patient father cannot be denied ; but the father never seems to have taken any steps to win his confidence ; and it was this systematic suspicion and distrust which, I contend, were largely responsible in confirming the prince in his unruly ways : what he had begun from excess of youthful exuberance, he continued because he found that promise of reform only resulted in his being suspected of insincerity ; and because his advances were met by coldness and contempt. He made a bad name for himself by his own volition, no doubt ; he more thoroughly earned it through the disregard of one who never really gave him a chance.

It is generally the case that the popular conception of a man's character is based on those general lines which result from hearsay. The people as a whole does not largely trouble itself about details. It loves labels ; and it would be an interesting study in speculation as to how and why certain outstanding figures have gained the

¹ It is but fair to say that the story of Hannah Lightfoot has been carefully investigated by W. J. Thoms, who could find nothing to substantiate the story of George III.'s connection with her.

reputation for ill or good with which they wander, poor helpless ghosts, about the pages of history. For some recondite reason, a man or woman is dismissed with a phrase or an epithet complimentary or otherwise, and there is an end of the matter. The label seems to presuppose the impossibility of any other quality than that recorded. It is for this reason that the public is occasionally surprised to find in some special study of an historic character a directly opposite conclusion to that which it has been, from time immemorial, holding; and when Cæsar Borgia is shown not to have been wholly bad, and Macchiavelli not to have lived up to his eponymous reputation; when Henry VIII. is proved to have had other and better qualities than those exhibited in his relations with the other sex; when Mary is revealed rather as a conscientious objector to other people's consciences than an essentially cruel woman, the public is vastly surprised, and, perhaps, a little amazed that a hasty judgment should have induced it to affix a wrong inscription.

I have always felt that something of this sort has occurred in the case of George IV. That his private life does not make appropriate reading *virginibus puerisque* is but too true. But it may equally be stated that neither does the life of his period generally; that he did less than justice to many of those fair ones whose wings were singed by his fervent rays is a fact; but it is also

a fact that if he pursued many to their undoing, and acted like a blackguard to many, he was himself an object of attention and pursuit by more, and it was not he who was always the satyr nor they who were always the reluctant nymphs. In marriage he was as unfortunate as was Henry VIII., although he cannot be said to have had the passionate, almost blood-thirsty, clinging to it which distinguished his Tudor forbear. Had he been born in a private station, there would have been no doubt about the sanctity of his alliance with Mrs. Fitzherbert; nor would he have been bound, as, being what he was, he was obliged by State reasons to be, to enter into a matrimonial partnership with a lady whose misfortunes have rather blinded apologists to her essential levity and lack of conventional balance.

As I have said, a young prince, especially if he be heir to a throne, is exposed to a variety of temptations which do not assail lesser men. Excesses of all sorts are not only within his reach, but are forced upon him; and he must be more than humanly cold and irresponsible, or must be endowed with superhuman perspicacity, to withstand their syren appeal. But he is a mark for a yet more dangerous kind of temptation. He becomes at once the hope and the tool of all who are in opposition to the Crown; of all the political adventurers who see in him a means of self-advancement or a figure-head under whose

ægis they may with a certain safety and plausibility attack the actual ruler or his ministers.

George proved a very pliant and decorative head of such a faction, and as such he did but follow the lead of his ancestors George, Prince of Wales (afterwards George II.), and Frederick, Prince of Wales; neither of whom possessed a tithe of his cleverness and none of his charm. For if he remotely resembled both in certain of his instincts—like the latter, he played the 'cello quite adequately for a prince—he had nothing of the dulness and heaviness of the one or the foolishness of the other. He was, indeed, the Prince Charming of the fairy tale; and the very antithesis he proved to his father, in manners, appearance, and natural gifts, gave him a power over the imagination of the people which he used often unwisely, sometimes viciously, sometimes well.

Like most of the rakes (for there is no getting away from the fact that he was as right royally a rake as ever was Charles II.) he lived too long for his reputation. Had he been cut off prematurely, we might have considered him as another Henry, Prince of Wales, so promising was his advent into life, so venial were his earlier departures from rectitude, so delightful and fascinating were his manners, and so ready his wit and abundant good humour. But, unfortunately for him, he outlived his good looks and his slim

figure ; even after a time his good humour ; and although there stayed with him always something of a royal *bonhomie*, flashes of an earlier wit, and his quite remarkable power of imitation, such things were but flashes exhibited in those *petits comités* in which he involved himself like some fat and rather torpid chrysalis in an inverted state of passivity, its butterfly existence long past and eternally regretted. Until at long last he comes down to us in imagination, not as the gay leader of fashion, not as the Beau among Kings, which Brummel had produced, not as the effulgent centre of the most splendid coronation on record ; but as a bloated face under a curling wig, a star, a pathetic attempt at a waist, a pair of legs and a footstool. There, indeed, he sits on that almost historic sofa which he came so much to prefer to a throne : bored, listless, the used-up voluptuary whose enjoyments had dwindled down to the silly, monotonous, conversational gambolling of Lady Conyngham, and his too frequent glass of milk-punch.

We get all kinds of glimpses of him in the literature of the day—in Creevy, of whose record there is hardly a page without something about ‘Prinny’ ; in Raikes, who records that gift for mimicry which under other auspices might have created a *furore*—à la Charles Matthews—on another sort of stage to that which he daily trod ; in Greville, where all his faults are “ set in a note-

book, conned and learn'd by rote"; in an hundred memoirs and diaries of the period through which he struts his royal, regardless, way. We see him in little vignettes; landing in a boisterously vociferous Ireland; donning the garb of the Land o' Cakes; leading the applause which greeted his toast to Sir Walter; imitating Kemble to the life at Carlton House; the be-gartered and be-stayed host in that amazing Yellow Room at the Pavilion; or driving his ponies along the retired roads at Windsor. . . . He had come at length to assume something of the attitude of an oriental potentate, withdrawn from the eyes of his people; daily perusing with ever-increasing annoyance that blotched, pouchy face which looked back at him from the royal mirrors; sensitive as a young girl to the undue development of that replete figure. In those fastnesses which he affected, popular imagination ran riot, and visualised scenes as oriental in their audacity as they were in their secretiveness. But in reality they were as deadly dull as the environment of Browning's poet, who, so far from having

"twenty naked girls to change his plate,"

was to be found

"playing a decent cribbage with his maid."

George's 'maid' was equally mature and probably more protuberant, and there could have been little of romance in the presence of Lady

Conyngham, whom Frances Lady Shelley calls "kill-joy" but whom the now easily satisfied monarch thought "the most agreeable, clever woman that he ever knew."

As it was in the latter years of his life, so it had been throughout his career : he was not only blamed for those things of which the details were known—and, indeed, there were plenty of grounds for censure—but was also suspected of all sorts of enormities of which he was guiltless. There were even to be found those who questioned his honour on the turf ; but in that affair in which his groom Chifney was implicated, there seems little doubt that it was George's determination to stand by his servant (a characteristic not always marked among royal personages, and one which should not be forgotten to be placed to his credit), that led to much of the scandalous gossip to which the incident gave rise.

As I shall have occasion to show later on, the Prince's relations with women, from Harriot Vernon and Mary Robinson onward, were such as might be expected when a handsome, ardent young man meets with beautiful girls who know very well that when the Heir Apparent pays them marked attention he can only have one object in view ; they possess, indeed, a wholly different character from those which pass between young people of equal station. As a contemporary puts it, "the usual expectation of any

matrimonial union resulting from the familiar and affectionate intercourse cannot for a moment be entertained; and, therefore, by the strictly virtuous female, whom no blandishments, however royal, can divert from the path of modesty, cannot be received but with the most repulsive indignation." Certainly Lady Sarah Campbell realized this, as we shall see, and withstood the temptation, although perhaps not exactly with what our author curiously terms "repulsive indignation." Others, and there were many of them, were less circumspect, and the tale of Prince Charming's conquests is a long and varied one—as the innumerable locks of hair and other *gages d'amour* which were found after the Royal rake's death, abundantly testified, if in view of so many stories current concerning such escapades, these mute evidences, *disjecta membra* from love's funeral pyre, were required as evidence.

When 'Old Q' died full of years and profligacy, his octogenarian bed is said to have been covered by innumerable *billets doux*; when George IV. realised that Death had at last come to him, his cabinet was still filled with the proofs of his successes among the beautiful and the frail. After all a king is but a man, and this king was a very human one indeed, and as he lay there, very lonely in his majesty, some curious thoughts must have arisen as he cast back his eye over the stretched out pattern of his life, into which had been woven

so many fair faces. There was Lady Conyngham in another room, reigning where Lady Hertford had reigned, and Lady Jersey ; there was Mrs. Fitzherbert, ' his legal wife,' in her house in Tilney Street, nursing her regrets with a stoic calm ; but where was the beautiful ' Perdita ' of earlier years, and where the Miss Vernon, whose conquest had inaugurated so many more ? He might, too, have thought of his friends of long ago : the ' Jockey of Norfolk,' with whom he loved to drink deep at Brighton ; and Colonel Greville, who went abroad with him ; and Malden, who helped to arrange interviews with Harriot Vernon and, later, with Mary Robinson ; and Hanger, who frequented Carlton House ; and Morris, who sang so well ; and Hook, whose genius he had first recognised at Hertford House ; and the Brummell, who made him a man of taste and fashion. . . .

It is in connection with the last, indeed, that George has chiefly earned that title for ingratitude with which he has been charged. Brummell had many faults, but after all he has made for himself an undying figure, and for what it was worth he converted the heir to the throne into a leader of fashion. All that looked best about the Prince was of Brummell's doing, and even the Prince was pleased to be a pupil of the then supreme sovereign of *ton*. He cultivated his acquaintance ; he made him one of his intimate associates ; he hung on

his words and dressed at his orders ; and when the Beau once said that he had made him what he was, he was asserting no more than the truth. That Brummell took advantage of the royal condescension (if in his exalted mind he realised that it was condescension) cannot be denied ; and he did and said things which might easily have amazed a less complacent egoist than George. But how anyone could have seen his once bosom friend brought down from his high estate to a miserable destitution, without moving a finger on his behalf, as the Prince saw Brummell brought down, is surprising indeed.

George was, on the whole, not a bad friend ; he was admittedly a good master ; and he stood by those who stood by him with something of more than a royal constancy. But Brummell had hit him in his most tender part ; he had reflected on his growing bulk ; he had penetrated the armour of his inordinate vanity—and he was never forgiven. All the old associates of the fallen King of Fashion did something to mitigate his fall ; men whose dress he had derided, whose meanness he had criticised, whose social importance he had treated as nought, came forward in a friendly rivalry to help him in his need ; great personages knocked at his humble door at Calais and were ready still to pay that homage to the King in exile which they had paid to the King in Pall Mall and St. James's Street. But the greatest

personage of them all, who really owed the fallen star more than any of them, held aloof, disregarding even the one pathetic attempt which the "broken bow" (as Brummel once termed himself) made to shoot a final arrow into his obdurate and selfish heart. When in those last miserable days at Caen the poor, discarded, dilapidated dummy amused his vacant hours by holding imaginary receptions, and went to his door to receive the ghosts of those he had once known so well, there was no George, Prince of Wales, no Prince Regent, among the visionary throng; when the death of the King was announced to him, it mercifully brought back to his useless brain no memories of those earlier splendid days; and with champing jaws and vacant eyes the poor wretch went on with his daily toil of oiling the wig he had come to wear all awry. And as that wig, in his senseless hands, had lost its once tremendous significance—for did it not symbolise his lost power and authority?—so that other crown sat uneasily, and rather ungainly, on the head of the other monarch whose closing days were hardly less pathetic than those of the friend he had forgotten.

For George at Windsor and George at Calais had this in common: they had both outlived their magnificence. The two sexagenarians with so many mutual memories, with such a close intimacy to recall, monarchs each of a kingdom,

were dead to each other as if they had never been ; both miserably getting through, as best they could, their vacant, useless hours. But at least at Caen the Crown was daily exhibited and caressed ; at Windsor it had become too heavy to support, a useless bauble, even something of a bore.



CHAPTER II

GEORGE THE FOURTH (*Continued*)

THE details of the career of a man like George IV. require little of the recapitulation necessary in the case of lesser known personages. Much of such a life belongs to the history of the country, and as such is at least supposed to be generally known to most people. But every public man has another side to his character, and that other side is his private life. Monarchs are, however, hardly allowed even this privilege ; in their annals *tout se sçait*, as the French phrase it, and their private foibles, their idiosyncrasies, their delinquencies, are sooner or later exposed to that publicity which glares blatantly on all their doings, temporarily hidden as these may have been. Kings have no immunity from publicity ; they are always in the purple—a colour which has, perhaps, been responsible for that rather lurid tone that has been shed, from time immemorial, on their short-comings and backslidings.

George IV. is an outstanding example of this. Everything (well, practically everything) he did,

everyone with whom he had intimate relations, everything he said, and often much that he never said, people he never knew, things he never did, have come to be regarded as part and parcel of his life and character—have coloured the former and have vitiated, past redemption, the latter. Unfortunately for him his period was one when people wrote few books, but expended their energy and, as it is now termed, expressed themselves, in letters of inordinate length and diaries of amazing indiscreetness. George figures in most of these with an insistence for which his exalted station is not alone able to account. The fact is he had personality beyond any member of his family. The reign of George I. was the reign of a foreigner ; the reign of George II. was the reign of Walpole and Queen Caroline ; the reign of George III. was a reign of innumerable cabinets and innumerable conquests ; that of George IV. was, in spite of Wellington and Canning, the reign of George IV., although few monarchs have ever shown themselves so regardless of their duties or so determined to pursue their own pleasures. Yet in spite of this, in spite of the almost oriental seclusion he came to affect, it is his bulky figure which stands forth, bewigged and bedizened with the glittering star of the great order, from whose tenets he so continually departed, shining on his ample form, that comes before us when we conjure up his kingly period, to the exclusion of

those whose puppet he really was and at whose direction the country was carried on.

Had he come to the throne fresh to the experiences of sovereignty in 1820, he might, perhaps, have exhibited an interest in government, which he lacked ; but the Regency had taken off the edge of novelty ; and during those years when he had reigned (though with certain restrictions) without being actually a King, he exhibited better traits of sovereignty than when he developed into a full-blown monarch. Boredom was his curse. He had tried all experiences ; and he sought in vain for novel sensations. It was this which made him really enjoy for a time his boisterous Irish welcome and his Scott-engineered burst of popularity in the northern kingdom. But after such vociferous campaigns he returned to his Jerseys and Hertfords and Conynghams, rather disillusioned, and found in the over-heated rooms of the Pavilion or Carlton House little to amuse him but his self-revelation as a mimic or his self-indulgence in the bottle. And yet it was but yesterday, as it seemed, since he was toying with Harriot Vernon in the corridors of Windsor, or playing Florizel to the beautiful and compliant Perdita in the alleys of Kew.

Even if one is not strictly biographical it is at least necessary to carry our Prince back in person to those days when, fresh from the hands of his tutors (and good as they were he had, like other

heirs to the throne, a shocking bad education)—Dr. Markham, Dr. Hurd, Dr. Jackson, Mr. Arnold, and the rest, he began that career as a rake of which, with Charles II., he is the outstanding example in the annals of English royalty.

A well-known portrait shows Queen Charlotte with the infant prince in her arms. He is sleeping and his mother holds up a warning finger to any who may disturb his slumbers. That warning finger might well have been held up to the biographer Huish and the diarist Greville, in an attempt to stay their hands, in later years, too regardlessly laid on the reputation of the Lord's anointed. But such turbulent causes for reprobation were in the future; and nothing disturbs the little sleeper, who could not then have been far removed from that 12th of August, 1762, on which he was born.

As a child George is said to have been subject to sudden and violent impressions, to have had a warm temper, but a generous and friendly disposition. In time this warmth occasionally developed into something ungovernable, and, as Huish says, "as he had been early taught to know the dignity of his station, any affront given to that dignity was seldom overlooked," in which early trait we may, perhaps, trace the secret of his neglect of Brummell.

Although, as I have remarked, the Prince's education had been carefully mapped out by his

father, and conducted as closely as possible by various tutors, one essential fact was overlooked—no effort was undertaken to make the boy acquainted with the actualities of life. What knowledge he gained was gained from books, not from personal observation and experience or in contact with anybody beyond the limited court circle that hedged him in. The inevitable happened. Released at length from the control of tutors and governors, the Prince found awaiting his advent into life a number of those of both sexes ready to minister to his gratification in a variety of ways. George was not backward in accepting the alluring invitation, and with this first break-away from the ideals of the Royal home, went hand in hand the first of those misunderstandings which gradually increased between him and his parents.

On August 12th, 1781, the Prince reached his majority, an event marked by a splendid celebration at Windsor, including a ball; and it was at this ball that George showed very markedly his partiality for that Lady Sarah Campbell whose name I have already mentioned, who was, however, not destined to take her place in the long list of his conquests. George no doubt fell desperately in love with the young lady, whom a contemporary describes as “an angelic creature,” and a proof of it is to be found in the following lines which he is said to have written, and

certainly sent her, the day after the ball. One does not somehow visualise the Prince as a poet, but Love works miracles—and, perhaps he was assisted in his lucubration. It will be observed that the concluding lines are wanting ; like much of the verse of the period they were wanting in a little restraint :

“ Oh ! Campbell, the scene of to-night
Has open'd the wound of my heart ;
It has shown me how great the delight
Which the charms of thy converse impart.
I've known what it is to be gay.
I've revell'd in joy's fleeting hour,
I've wish'd for the close of the day,
To meet in a thick-woven bower.

'Twas there that the soft-stolen kiss,
'Twas there that the throb of our hearts,
Betray'd that we wish'd for the bliss
Which love, and love only, imparts.
But Fate will those hearts oft dissever,
By Nature design'd for each other ;
But why should they part ? and for ever !
And forced their affections to smother.

How short and how blissful the hour
When round each lone hamlet we stray'd ;
When passion each heart could o'erpower,
And a sigh the sweet feelings betray'd.
O whence is that glance of the mind
Which scenes that are past oft renews ;
Which showers them, in colours refined,
With Fancy's bright glitt'ring hues ?

Now, sweet be thy slumbers, my friend,
And sweet be the dreams of thy soul ;
Around thee may angels attend,
And visions of happiness roll.”

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So far the Prince's excursions into amatory realms had not been attended by ill results. Young gentlemen who burst into poetry have sighed, maybe, but have generally sighed in vain ; and the flirtation of George with Lady Sarah was of a quite harmless nature ; although, if we are to credit the evidence of the foregoing lines, it was probably not the Prince's fault that it was so.

Not long after this episode, however, another beautiful girl crossed his path, and did not escape scathless. This was the Harriot Vernon to whom allusion has already been made, and who was about this time one of the royal Maids of Honour. Possessed of very fine dark eyes and a beautiful figure, she soon attracted the notice of George, who cast about in all directions for an opportunity of meeting her privately. This was no easy matter, so closely was he watched ; so strictly secluded ; so jealously guarded from the results too likely to occur from his already guessed-at partiality for the fair. And, indeed, for a time he was only able to indicate to the young lady the warmth of his feelings by gestures and signs made at one of the windows of his apartments which happened to overlook (by one of Queen Charlotte's oversights) those occupied by the Maids of Honour. However, a go-between was at length found in Lord Malden, " the gallant, good-natured, lively, and handsome " young man,¹ whose friendly

¹ He was born in 1757 and was, therefore, but five years older than the Prince.

offices in this direction were by no means confined to this occasion. He successfully arranged for the two to communicate by letter, and not long after managed a meeting between the Prince and his *inamorata* in a secluded part of the grounds of Kew Palace. This initial interview was, however, not to pass undisturbed. Everything had been arranged, and the Prince appeared on the scene, disguised in one of Malden's great-coats; the young lady was also true to the tryst, and Malden had discreetly retired, when the Duke of York came rushing from the Palace, to tell his brother that the King was enquiring for him, in order that he might play chess with him! A contemporary, using that flowery form of language not unusual at the period, remarks that one more moment "and as sweet a rose-bud as ever bloomed on its parent-stem, would have lain defoliated at his feet." The sequel was not, however, long delayed; and the Prince thus inaugurated his series of conquests by that of his mother's Maid of Honour.

It must have been after the first abortive meeting that Queen Charlotte is said to have introduced, obviously *avec intention*, the subject of her attendant's daily routine, into a conversation she had with her son.

"Well," remarked her Majesty, "taking it on the whole, the life of a Maid of Honour is a very monotonous one!"

“ I perfectly agree with your Majesty,” replied the Prince, “ it must be dulness itself : for what can be more vexatious to the spirits, than to make one of a formal procession through the presence-chamber to the drawing-room ; never to speak but when she is spoken to ; to make an occasional one of six large hoops in a royal coach ; to make up, at least, two new court suits a year, and to aid the languor of an easy party at a side-box in a royal play ? ”

“ And, George, is there no other act which a Maid of Honour performs ? ” asked the Queen, significantly.

“ O yes,” replied the Prince, “ she goes to plays, concerts, oratorios, etc., *gratis* ; she has physicians without fees, and medicines without an apothecary’s bills.”

“ But you have forgotten one very material act,” said the Queen.

“ Very likely,” said the Prince, “ the acts of a Maid of Honour formed no part of my education.”

“ Then I will tell you one,” said the Queen, “ of which you have lately attained the knowledge ; and that is, you were right when you said that a Maid of Honour goes to plays and concerts and oratorios *gratis* ; but you forgot to add that she also flirts with young Princes, and goes to meet them by moonlight ;—and is that also *gratis* ? ” ¹

¹ See Huish’s *Life of George IV.*

Had her Majesty been aware to what lengths this, as she evidently thought, mere flirtation, was to go, we may imagine that she would have exhibited her anger in far more forcible terms.

“A few days previously to this conversation Harriot Vernon had ceased to be an honourable maid—the day subsequent to it she was no longer a Maid of Honour,” writes Huish. George, having once begun a career of gallantry, lost no time in prosecuting it with the ardour for which he was in his earlier days notable. He had become surrounded by a number of persons by whom he was flattered to the top of his bent, and who led him to suppose that his powers of fascination were irresistible—as, indeed, they often proved to be. The consequence was that he came soon to doubt the possession of virtue by any woman—a cynical point of view in which he was but too frequently confirmed by the way in which his advances were met.

He began to frequent those places of public amusement, such as the assemblies of Mrs. Cornelys, the Pantheon, Vauxhall and Ranelagh, where were to be met the noted *hetairai* of the day, and those ladies of fashion who in appearance and manners so often challenged the claims of the professional courtesans and copied their habits and customs with successful sedulousness. Not infrequently disturbances arose, especially in the latter resorts, and as often as not the Prince



GEORGE IV. AS PRINCE OF WALES
(STIPPLE BY BARTOLOZZI AFTER VIOLET).

(face p 32)

was embroiled in these, sometimes as a principal ; sometimes from the fact of being on friendly terms with the hot-headed young men of fashion who, further heated by wine and excitement, were ready to insult all and sundry and to press their amatory attentions on young ladies who were not always willing to meet them half-way.

As may be imagined, those whose duty it was to look after the safety of the Heir Apparent found their hands full with so boisterous and reckless a charge ; and it was probably due to their caution and not to the Prince's initiative that whenever he went into such haunts, a band of resolute fellows was always at hand ready to rescue him from any dispute in which he should involve himself. More often than not disguise was resorted to ; and this, on one occasion, resulted in an amusing sequel. At a certain masquerade, the Prince was so well made up as a Spanish Grandee that his identity was completely hidden. During the evening he perceived a young girl dressed as a nun, who seemed to be under the protection of a sailor. Attracted by the young lady's appearance, the Prince began to pay her such marked attention as not only to put her to great confusion, but also to annoy her companion so much that the latter at last told the unknown Spaniard that if he persisted in his impertinence he would give him a sound hiding. Nothing daunted, the Grandee in no way

relaxed his efforts to force his attentions on the lady. High words arose and soon developed into a furious quarrel, the dispute assuming such a character that the constables were called in, and the whole party was marched off to the Watch House, the Spanish Grandee leading the way with more than Hidalgo assurance and dignity. Arrived at their destination they were desired to communicate their real names and quality ; whereupon the Grandee and the sailor unmasked, when lo and behold ! the former turned out to be George Prince of Wales, the latter his brother, William Duke of Clarence. The whole party, we are told, burst into boisterous laughter, and, the constable on duty having been squared by a piece of gold, returned " to complete the frolics of the night."

But such public resorts as Ranelagh and Vauxhall were not by any means the only places favoured by Prince George when in quest of nightly amusement. There was a certain house, kept by the once notorious Mrs. Collett, which the young rake is known to have frequented and where resorts were made to all kinds of stimulants to natural passion. This woman's first headquarters were in Tavistock Court ; but were later removed to Portland Place ¹ and it was not improbably when returning on one occasion from here that the Prince was held up and robbed

¹ Later still she went to Bedford Street, Russell Square, where she died.

on Hay Hill by a highwayman whom he always asserted to have been Champneys, the then well-known singer. It is certainly said that the reason why no investigations were made into the affair was because, on the evening before the robbery the Prince had been at some house whose whereabouts he was not anxious should be known ; and as he would have had to account for his actions during those hours, the matter was allowed to drop.

There was a number of similar resorts to that of Mrs. Collett at this time and for many years later ; one was at No. 7 Carlisle Square, and was kept by a Mrs. James ; Mrs. Mitchell carried on Mrs. Collett's 'business,' after her death, in Bedford Street, Russell Square ; another was at 50 Margaret Street, Regent Street, run by a so-called Mrs. Emma Lee whose real name was Richardson ; and the premises of Mrs. Phillips and Mrs. Sarah Potter, *alias* Stewart, were also well known to the young men of pleasure, at that time. At a still later date, the house of Mrs. Theresa Berkeley, at 28 Charlotte Street, was notorious for its famous 'Horse,' and remarkable collection of whips and other appliances. This worthy published her 'memoirs,' in which may indeed be read strange matters—as strange as are told of the notorious White House,¹ 20 Soho Square, which had a dis-

¹ It had originally been designed for Earl Tylney, by Colin Campbell.

creet side-entrance, with iron gates, in Sutton Street, and of which it is said that some who entered never emerged alive.

The apartments of the White House were of a very peculiar character ; some were known as the Silver, Gold and Bronze rooms on account of their decorations, and were all filled with large mirrors ; another room was called ' The Painted Chamber ' ; another ' The Grotto ' ; yet another, ' The Coal Hole ' ; and there was one apartment designated ' The Skeleton Room,' in which, by a clever mechanical contrivance, a skeleton was made to issue from a cupboard.¹

There is little doubt that the Prince came, sooner or later, to have a personal acquaintance with these and other similar resorts. Those who found it to their advantage to pander to his pleasures were not likely to overlook such means of amusement, just as they furthered the pursuit of any girl which he had himself initiated. It must not be supposed, in these latter cases, that George had always any special difficulties with which to contend. The heir to the throne has from time immemorial been regarded by a certain class of light woman as fair game, as, indeed, the highest form of game at which to fly ; and the apparent ease with which he overcame well-simulated scruples, after he had been cleverly led

¹ There is a curious anecdote connected with Mrs. Opie and the White House, given in Cyrus Redding's *Recollections of Fifty Years*, vol. i, p. 80.

on in the hunt, made him suppose himself invincible and indeed *le vainqueur du monde*—of women.

A serious defect in the Prince's education was largely responsible not only for this impression but also for the passion with which he threw himself into such things, and the delight with which he thus celebrated his emancipation from tutelage, and came to regard as a novelty that association with the other sex which young men not so circumscribed had, at his age, come to look upon as usual. He had not had an opportunity of mixing with the young of his own age, outside the dull and formal circle of the royal family. About a year before attaining his majority he had been invited by some of the nobility to stay at their country seats ; an invitation which he had eagerly accepted, only to meet with a peremptory refusal from the King to allow of such an excursion. As a contemporary puts it : " A system of restraint pushed to this extent could not fail to have an injurious influence on the conduct of his Royal Highness at his first introduction to public life ; for, in proportion to the force of the restraint which was put upon him, so were his gay and wanton wanderings, when he found himself emancipated from the trammels of parental and scholastic authority."

When the moment arrived for him to have a separate establishment, and a large (though not so large as his immediate predecessors had had

in the same position) income, it may well be imagined that the Prince gave a loose rein to his hitherto only half-satisfied desires. Many of his *entourage* too, who should have known better, endeavoured to make him dependent on themselves, by becoming the depositories of his secrets and coadjutors in his more reprehensible actions, and he thus found himself inextricably tied up in gordian knots of their contriving, from which he could only escape by their aid. Politics did not disdain to benefit by such trickery as this, and even men of undoubted talents and genius became thus at once his panders and his proprietors. It was largely due to such adverse influences as these that George, whose once generous temper might have helped to turn him, when the first heat of youth was over, into better courses, grew deadened and his mind vitiated, so that he became at last unmanageable by those who sought to direct him, and cynical towards those who had already helped him.

His relations with women does not make pleasant reading, in whatever spirit one contemplates them. In nearly every case he began by being ardent, so ardent indeed that tears and threats of self-destruction fell equally from his eyes and lips; he displayed that morbid sentimentalism which was to remain with him practically all his life. Followed a period of delighted complacency in the possession of the desired fair one—until one

day a still more desired and fairer one crossed his path; and with a cynical indifference the former *inamorata* was discarded, and too often left neglected to pine away her future heavy hours of regret and disillusion. Over and over again was this tale repeated, from the days of the too-trusting Harriot Vernon to those of the sophisticated great ladies of easy ethics who bulk so largely as the rather florid sultanas of a gross and florid Sultan.

Generally George's love-affairs, and they became in time so numerous as to tax the arts of concealment still considered necessary, were managed with adroitness and success. The Prince was surrounded by plenty of willing tools who saw to it that his triumphs should be as safely contrived as they were assured. Now and again, however, he found himself in so delicate a situation that nothing but good luck and ancillary cunning were able to extricate him. Concerning one of these *contretemps* Huish gives an amusing account—an account which without periphrasis may be set down for once in his own words, although his general way of telling a story is characteristically long winded and verbose.

One of the most celebrated beauties of the British Court at this time was, he tells us, Mrs. M——, whose husband is still living (Huish is writing *circa* 1830), and who enjoyed a situation in the household, with apartments in the palace

as his residence. His avocations frequently required his personal attendance in town, and it was during these temporary visits that the Prince succeeded in ingratiating himself in the good opinion of his angelic wife ; but it happened that one of those events took place which the imps of mischief are sometimes so industriously and provokingly employed in bringing about for the purpose of marring the happiness of human beings, when it is least expected by them. Mr. M—— had on one occasion expressed his determination to remain in town during the night, as he did not expect that his business could be completed so as to admit of his return during the day. As might be expected, the advantage of this opportunity was not to be lost ; it was most anxiously embraced by both parties, and the sleeping apartment of the Prince was on that night to be tenantless. It happened, however, that the business of Mr. M—— was finished sooner than he expected ; and as the hour of midnight struck from the tower of the palace, he was heard knocking at the outer door of his apartments in the courtyard. Consternation filled the breasts of the hitherto happy lovers—to escape out of the room was impossible ; a detection would be the inevitable ruin of one of the parties and the indelible disgrace of the other. In this emergency no other recourse was left but concealment in a small adjoining room, but then the confinement

would continue the whole of the night, and the escape in the morning, when the whole of the household would be in motion, could not be expected to be accomplished without a discovery. But there was no alternative; the Prince slipped on his clothes, and hurried into the adjoining room. He was, however, rescued from his distressing situation by the address of Mr. Cholmondely, who in this amour was the confidant of the Prince, and who, happening to see Mr. M—— knocking at the door of his apartments, hurried towards him, exclaiming, “My dear M——, I am truly rejoiced at your return; something of a rather unpleasant nature has happened to the Prince, and he commanded me to desire your attendance in my apartments immediately on your return. Accompany me, therefore, thither without delay, and I will hasten to apprise the Prince that you are in attendance.”

There was nothing by any means improbable in the Prince being in some dilemma, as it was by no means a case of rarity, and Mr. M—— therefore most willingly accompanied Mr. Cholmondely to his apartments, where he was politely invited to repose himself until Mr. C—— went in search of the Prince. The sequel may be easily foreseen: Mr. Cholmondely hastened to the apartments of Mr. M——, liberated the Royal lover from his confinement, and hastening back to Mr. M——, he informed him that the Prince had

retired to rest ; and on the following morning Mr. M—— was informed that the business had been arranged without his interference.

George found other favouring fair ones elsewhere than in the precincts of the Royal residences : The Opera House, where ' Old Q ' played such havoc, and the theatres, always associated with the free and easy ways which so often lend a sort of meretricious adornment to such connections, were among his happy hunting grounds ; and there were always plenty of frail beauties anxious to throw themselves in his way, and plenty of interested persons ready to force into his way beauties that were rather frail than vicious. As we all know, the famous Perdita Robinson (to whom I must dedicate the next chapter) was one of the latter ; probably another young lady who, at this time, attracted the Royal attention may be numbered among the former. This was an Italian, La Carnovalla, whose husband (the Prince seems to have had a passion for married women) was a member of the Opera orchestra, and who, not improbably as the price of his wife's honour, certainly through the Prince's influence, became, later, manager of the Opera House.

La Carnovalla is described as being not so much a beauty as a woman of extraordinary fascination of manner. Anyhow the Prince was fascinated, and although his passion for the lady did not last long—George was, indeed, curiously fickle in most

of his amours—it was quite long enough to be the talk of the town, and was one of those disreputable affairs which had an unfortunate sequel. For Signior Carnovalla afterwards set fire to the Opera House (he was admittedly a *mauvais sujet*) and the Prince incurred no small amount of blame, not perhaps so much for seducing his wife as for introducing the husband into a position for which he was in no way suitable.



CHAPTER III

GEORGE THE FOURTH (*Continued*)



I HAVE said that the theatres provided the Prince with not a few of those ladies whom he delighted to distinguish by his attentions; and, later on, several others will have to be noticed; but chronologically one here takes her place, who, with the exception of Mrs. Fitzherbert, is better known in this connection than any of the rest. I allude to Mary Robinson, the famous 'Perdita,' whose beauty, talents and untoward fate have helped to give her an interest of a peculiar kind, and who succeeded in preserving her royal admirer's fidelity for a longer period than any girl had hitherto done.

Mrs. Robinson, who has left us in her *Memoirs* a rather highly coloured and verbose account of her connection with Prince Florizel, was originally a Miss Derby, and had married at an early age a lawyer's clerk of careless and profligate character, whose frequent absences from her, sometimes due to his being thrown into prison for debt, left her exposed to the attentions of various libertines

attracted by her charm and beauty, and finally resulted in a regular separation. She appears to have had some facility with her pen, and through this means gained an introduction to the lovely Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire,¹ by whose influence with Garrick and Sheridan she obtained an engagement at Drury Lane, where she proved so successful that she was given such classic parts as those of Juliet and Perdita; which latter character she was sustaining when she attracted the notice of the Prince of Wales, who was then in his nineteenth year, while she was in her twenty-first.

Mrs. Robinson herself tells us of the eventful evening when, *The Winters Tale* having been commanded by the King, she appeared in the part which she had acted on previous occasions to the Hermione of Mrs. Hartley and Miss Farren respectively. Before she went on she was rallied in the Green Room on the beauty of her appearance, a Mr. Smith who was playing the part of Leontes prophetically exclaiming: "By Jove, Mrs. Robinson, you will make a conquest of the Prince, for to-night you look handsomer than ever." When she appeared, indeed, his Royal Highness had eyes for no one else, his gaze being so markedly centred on her that, as she remarks, she "hurried through the first scene, not without much embarrassment, owing to the fixed attention with which

¹ *Life of George IV.*, by Lloyd, 1830.

the Prince of Wales honoured me." The circumstance was generally noticed, and on the fall of the curtain their eyes met, "and," continues the lady, "with a look that *I never shall forget* the Prince gently inclined his head a second time." Perdita had two Florizels that night.

During the progress of the play, Lord Malden, who was behind the scenes and was acquainted with Mrs. Robinson, never ceased talking to her between the acts, and took particular occasion to point out what she had naturally no difficulty in observing for herself, namely, the marked admiration of the Prince. It is possibly this circumstance that causes Lloyd to remark : " It is highly probable that there was a scheme in this ; for there was then a party who, to gain an ascendancy over the Prince, scrupled not to pander to his love of pleasure ;" and he thinks it unlikely that George, bred up under such restraint as he had been, would have ventured, without the promptings and assistance of such friends, to make advances to a married woman. The writer was evidently unacquainted with the incident in which Mrs. M—— figured ; and for that matter with the precocity of the prince in such affairs ; for although assistance may have been necessary, he hardly required prompting on such occasions by anyone.

A few days later Lord Malden, who acted throughout the initial stages of the intrigue as a

go-between, called on Mrs. Robinson, and presented the lady with a letter addressed to 'Perdita' and signed 'Florizel.' In her *Memoirs* she affects not to know who the writer was, and says that she was astonished on learning that the missive came from the Prince of Wales. But one may be forgiven for being sceptical as to this ingenuousness on the part of an actress admittedly no stranger to such advances, although she seems hitherto to have remained obdurate.

It is surprising to learn that "for some months a confidential correspondence was carried on between these celebrated parties."¹ George exercised on this occasion a patience and restraint very unusual in his amatory exploits. The castle needed, one supposes, very careful and adroit besieging before it fell. Anyhow, not only were letters carried to and fro by the assiduous Malden, but a miniature (one of Meyer's) of the Prince, with which was "a small heart cut in paper," bearing on one side the words *Je ne change qu'en mourant*, and on the other *Unalterable to my Perdita through life*, passed from Florizel's possession to Perdita's.

At last Mrs. Robinson consented to meet her royal lover; the difficulty was where this was to take place. Lord Malden suggested his own house in Dean Street, Mayfair; but the Prince was so carefully guarded that this was considered

¹ Huish.

too hazardous ; then it was proposed that the young lady should get introduced into Buckingham House itself ; but she absolutely declined to run so great a risk ; so there was nothing for it but the old place of assignation in the grounds of Kew Palace, where the memory of Harriot Vernon still haunted ; and there the first meeting took place, not inappropriately, in the case of Perdita, in such a sylvan spot. Mrs. Robinson may tell of it in her own words, contained in a letter to a friend :

“ At length an evening was fixed for this long dreaded interview. Lord Malden and myself dined at the inn on the island, between Kew and Brentford. We waited the signal for crossing the river in a boat which had been engaged for the purpose. Heaven can witness how many conflicts my agitated heart endured at this most important moment ! I admired the Prince, I felt grateful for his affection. He was the most engaging of created beings. I had corresponded with him for many months, and his eloquent letters, the exquisite sensibility which breathed through every line, his ardent professions of adoration, had combined to shake my feeble resolution. The handkerchief was waved on the opposite shore, but the signal was, by the dusk of the evening, rendered almost imperceptible. Lord Malden took my hand, I stepped into the boat, and in a few minutes we landed before the iron gates of old Kew Palace.

The interview was but of a moment. The Prince of Wales, and the Duke of York, were walking in the avenue. They hastened to meet us. A few words, and those scarcely articulate, were uttered by the Prince, when a noise of the people approaching from the Palace startled us. The moon was now rising, and the idea of being overheard, or of his Royal Highness being seen out at so unusual an hour, terrified the whole group. After a few more words of the most affectionate nature uttered by the Prince, we parted, and Lord Malden and myself returned to the island. The Prince never quitted the avenue nor the presence of the Duke of York, during the whole of this short meeting. Alas ! my friend, if my mind was before influenced by esteem, it was now awakened by the most enthusiastic admiration. The rank of the Prince no longer chilled into awe that being who now considered him as the lover and the friend. The graces of his person, the irresistible sweetness of his smile, the tenderness of his melodious yet manly voice, will be remembered by me, till every vision of the changing scene shall be forgotten."

"What hight of foine language entoiely," as Thackeray says somewhere ; but after all, what a fiasco ! Always those people rushing out of the Palace (as they did, you remember, in the Harriot Vernon interview), always the presence of the insistent York—and yet, after a few minutes of

hurried and scarcely articulate love-making, such was the force of a royal personality, that Mrs. Robinson can become lyrical even on this short measure ! However, it was a beginning, though hardly a promising one ; and we hear of other meetings, many and frequent, indeed, at the same romantic spot, when “ our walks were continued till past midnight,” although the assiduous brother and friend were always there too. Nothing, we are told, could be “ more delightful or more rational ” than these nocturnal perambulations. Only York’s buff coat was so likely to attract attention ; and he seemed wedded to that particular garment ; but as the Prince would occasionally enliven matters by bursting into melody—“ he sang with exquisite taste, and the tones of his voice breaking on the silence of the night, have often appeared to my entranced senses like more than mortal melody ; ” one wonders why all the mystery was necessary ; the Prince seemed so determined on detection ! Perhaps Mrs. Robinson’s memory played her false, or the ardour of her poetic imagination !

Things, however, went their usual course. The lady was set up in a splendid establishment ; the old King was angry, although he seems to have confined himself to terming the Prince “ a thoughtless boy ; ” the public began to talk loudly, and scandalous paragraphs concerning the ‘ affair,’ as some termed them, paragraphs about the

‘scandalous affair,’ as they were termed by others, began to appear with painful frequency in the daily prints. “I now found it too late to stop the hourly augmenting torrent of abuse that was poured on me from all quarters,” writes Mrs. Robinson. “Whenever I appeared in public I was overwhelmed by the gazing of the multitude ; I was frequently obliged to quit Ranelagh owing to the crowd which staring curiosity had assembled round my box, and even in the streets of the Metropolis, I scarcely ventured to enter a shop, without experiencing the greatest inconvenience. Many hours have I waited till the crowd dispersed which surrounded my carriage, in expectation of my quitting the shop. I shuddered at the gulf before me, and felt small gratification in the knowledge of having taken a step, which many who condemned it would have been no less willing to imitate, had they been placed in the same situation.”

The Prince, who was ever ready to throw about money and readier still in promises, astonished Mrs. Robinson by sending her, in one of his early letters, a bond for £20,000, to be paid on his reaching his majority. “This paper,” she tells us, “was signed by the Prince and sealed with the royal arms,” and she adds that it was “expressed in terms so liberal, so voluntary, so marked by true affection, that I had scarcely power to read it.” Her tears flowed ; those ready

tears, so near the surface always in those days, which the sentimental prince also had at command as much as had his victim—but she felt shocked and mortified “at the indelicate idea of entering into any pecuniary engagements with one on whose establishment she relied for the enjoyment of all that would render life desirable.” George urged her to accept many costly gifts which he proposed ordering from Gray’s and other jewellers, with whom he had at this time unlimited credit; but Mrs. Robinson did not apparently hanker after such baubles; and it is fairly well established that she actually received in this way quite trifling presents from her royal lover, presents whose combined value is said not to have exceeded a hundred guineas.

The connection between the two lasted for about two years; and the break came to the lady with dramatic suddenness. “At the moment when everything was preparing for his Royal Highness’s establishment, when I looked impatiently for the day in which I might behold my adored friend gratefully receiving the acclamations of his future subjects, when I might enjoy the public protection of that being for whom I gave up all, I received a letter from his Royal Highness—a cold and unkind letter—briefly informing me, that *we must meet no more.*”

It is difficult to understand Mrs. Robinson’s attitude of mind, or the nature of her expectations.

She must, one would think, have been able to realise the fickleness which characterised George's relations with women. Did she suppose that she was to fill the *rôle* of a Pompadour or a Dubarry? And if so did she imagine that in such a country as the England of the Farmer King's reign, the Prince's public protection was likely to shield her from those annoyances which she found so irksome even when she was only semi-publicly acknowledged as the mistress of the Heir Apparent? We know that she had a certain facility with the pen, and these memoirs of hers are tinged with that romanticism and unreality which should more properly have been reserved for a work of pure fiction.

Whatever she may have expected, there is no doubt that she was little prepared for a sudden and harsh dismissal. Nor was she one to give up the fight without a struggle. The Prince was, at the moment, at Windsor, and for Windsor the lady set out that very night, in spite of warnings that highwaymen might be about. She nearly was, indeed, stopped on Hounslow Heath, and only the readiness of her postilion, a boy of nine and her sole companion, saved her from losing her purse and a diamond stud which she wore in her scarf.

Arrived at Windsor, one of the first people she saw was Mrs. Armstead,¹ and her prophetic soul at once scented a rival. The Prince refused to

¹ She was subsequently the mistress and then the wife of Charles James Fox.

see her ; but she had an interview with Lord Malden and the Duke of Dorset, neither of whom, however, knew, at least so they said, the reason for ' Florizel's ' sudden coldness. But her instinct, as well as her friends', told her that she had raised up a multitude of secret enemies ; that all sorts of calumnies were set on foot by those who were interested in dispossessing her of the Prince's affection ; that " so fascinating, so illustrious a lover " (they are her own words) " could not fail to excite the envy of my own sex." All sorts of stories were told to her discredit, and a fresh batch of caricatures and pamphlets, and that sort of paragraph which wounds by implication, came to trouble her peace of mind. Again she wrote to the Prince, and this time she received a reply " fully acquitting me of the charges which had been propagated to destroy me," she tells us ; although the Royal missive seems to have failed in any other way to satisfy her.

Some weeks elapsed thus, when the Prince consented to have an interview with his discarded mistress. The meeting took place : " We passed some hours in the most friendly and delightful conversation, and I began to flatter myself that all our differences were adjusted. But what words can express my surprise and chagrin when, on meeting his Royal Highness *the very next day* in Hyde Park, he turned his head to avoid seeing me, and even affected not to know me ? "

Florizel and Perdita were to meet no more. But so fascinated had the lady become with that charm and grace which were the Prince's chief stock-in-trade (if one may use so commercial a neologism in such an august connection) that even when discarded like a toy cast away by a petulant child when it has ceased to interest him, Mrs. Robinson cannot refrain from dwelling lyrically on the attractions of her former Royal admirer ; she has it in her even to speak seriously of his 'heart,' and could not believe that that "seat of so many virtues could possibly become inhuman and unjust." One supposes the moth can find glory even in the flame that destroys it !

Nor was Mrs. Robinson's infatuation a mere temporary phase of mind. To the end of her life her devotion to the Prince continued ; and when on her deathbed (in 1801) she desired that a lock of her hair might be cut off and sent to him ; a gift George received, we are told, "with strong demonstrations of sensibility." The fact is, he always had a fund of this on which to draw on every occasion ; his gradual addiction to the bottle increased what was already inherent ; and one can very well imagine him, between a glass and a glass, shedding maudlin tears over that lock of hair (at *his* death how many such were found discreetly preserved !), and the next instant toying with some new favourite, or drowning compunction (if he ever experienced that sentiment) in

fresh draughts of claret or the milk punch of his special predilection.

The trouble with the contemporary attitude towards these "moral delinquencies," as it was the fashion to call them, of George, Prince of Wales, is that the critics of that day either attempt to depict them as the last word in human depravity, or to gloss over them as venial indulgences quite excusable in a prince and, as it were, what was only to be expected from one in his position. They do not very nicely discriminate between the characters of the ladies in question, and the cases of Harriot Vernon (to take an instance) and Mary Robinson, are judged as if each was equally unsophisticated and ignorant of the ways of the world in general and of rakes in particular. Mrs. Robinson was certainly ill-used, but she can hardly be termed unwilling in what she did; whereas with regard to Miss Vernon, and others I shall have occasion to mention, it was a pure case of seduction by a brilliant, attractive, soft-speaking profligate who was habitually selfish in such matters, and habitually callous and ungrateful when his desires had been satisfied.

There is no doubt that Mrs. Armstead was the cause of the Prince's desertion of Mrs. Robinson.¹ He was satiated with the charms and beauty of

¹ Mrs. Robinson has left, in her *Memoirs*, published in 1801, an account of her intercourse with the Prince of Wales; she also published a volume of poems in 1803; some *Lyrical Tales* in 1800; and her complete *Poetical Works* in 1806.

Perdita, and was ready to be attracted by any new goddess. Mrs. Armstead was indeed one, if we are to believe contemporary accounts. For not only was she lovely, but, we are told, "her mental endowments were little inferior, if any, to those of the ill-fated Perdita." At this time, although living outwardly according to the strictest code of morals, she was secretly under the protection of Charles James Fox, and it was by him that she was introduced to the Prince. For a time Mrs. Armstead became the companion of the Heir Apparent, as it is euphemistically put, and Fox had to console himself as best he could for her temporary infidelity. But George, although he loved well while his passion for any selected object lasted, never loved long ; and in due course Mrs. Armstead shared the fate of her predecessors, although, unlike some of them, she was able to find a safe asylum, in this instance, with the 'Man of the People,' whose wife in due course she became.

It was about this time that the Prince began to show a marked predilection for Brighton, and it is said that the cause was not so much in the place itself as in the beauty of one of its inhabitants. It is a curious story that is told of this young lady, a certain Charlotte Fortescue, whose face and form left nothing to be desired, but who was ignorant and illiterate to the last degree. What she wanted in knowledge, however, she made

up for in artifice. It does not appear under what circumstances the Prince first met her, but that he was immediately smitten by her charms is undeniable. Charlotte was sufficiently wily to be able to make her admirer believe that she was innocent and unsophisticated ; she was also clever enough to find out, before long, the identity of her lover ; and she traded on both to the top of her bent. She played the *ingénue* to perfection ; she was coy ; she hinted at another adorer ; she even made the Prince believe she was about to be married ; and, at last, to such a state did she reduce the amorous young man, that he actually proposed an elopement, in which the lady was to be disguised as a footman, and a post-chaise was to be in readiness some way out of Brighton to bear the lovely prize to London and bliss.

An unlooked-for *dénouement* put an end to this romantic suggestion. One day, while dressing for dinner, the Prince heard of the sudden arrival of George Hanger at Brighton, and at once invited him to join the party. Later, the Royal host enquired what had brought Hanger to Brighton so unexpectedly ; to which the latter replied : “ A hunt, a hunt, your Royal Highness, I am in chase of a d——d fine girl, whom I met with at Mrs. Simpson’s, in Duke’s place ; and although I have taken private apartments for her in St. Anne’s East, yet the hussy takes it in her head every now and then to absent herself for a few days ;

and I have now been given to understand that she is carrying on some intrigue with a *fellow* at this place. Let me but catch him, and I will souse him over head and ears in the ocean."

A description of the young lady at once convinced the Prince that she was none other than the girl with whom he had made arrangements to elope; and he thereupon disclosed the whole matter to Hanger. The result was that the latter agreed to put on one of the coats which the Prince had worn during some of his visits to Charlotte, and to take his place in the post-chaise. Everything was carried out as arranged, and while the Prince remained at Brighton, Hanger bore off the fugitive in triumph to London.

A well-worn French proverb tells us that *l'appétit vient en mangeant*, and so it was with the love affairs of our profligate prince. For ever was the owner of some new and attractive face or form catching him in her toils; and as a young man he sought variety with the ardour of an old rake. For quickly as he was allured, as equally quickly was he satiated, and only by a constant succession of new objects could he be satisfied or amused. The recapitulation of these easy conquests becomes somewhat monotonous; but as *documents pour servir* to the history of the royal rake, they must find a place in these pages.

Many of the girls he dazzled by the beauty of his person and the great position he occupied were

first observed by his own eye, ever on the look-out for such prey ; some were purposely placed in his way by interested people, especially that band of licentious panderers of both sexes whom he attracted around him ; some of the objects of his concupiscence were hardly to be termed victims at all, for they partook of the character of that class which is as old and as enduring as the world. Nothing turned George from the pursuit of the first, the ready acceptance of the second, the pleased welcome of the third class. Not a feeling of compunction ; not a sentiment of honour or decency ; not the pathetic counsel of his father, when even in the intervals of his aberrations he prayed and implored him for the good of himself and of the country to refrain from setting the deplorable example of profligacy which, in a prince, is so much more far-reaching and reprehensible than it even is in a private person. Enjoyment was his motto, and with women and wine he passed his gay and thoughtless hours.

It is difficult to state with any chronological exactitude the moment when some fresh beauty attracted the prince's roving gaze. But it was about this period that he formed a temporary connexion with the famous singer, Mrs. Billington. He first met her behind the scenes of the theatre and immediately conceived a passion for her, although she was no great beauty and is described as "a pretty little figure, pale and seemingly

consumptive, though a very cunning look in her eyes.”¹ Huish remarks that: “to enter into any description of the life of Mrs. Billington previously to her connexion with the Prince were to stain our pages with the delineation of scenes injurious to the interests of the rising generation.” And this is sufficiently indicative of the character of the lady, without there being any necessity further to enlarge on it, although I may state that she is known to have been a favourite of the Duke of Cumberland.

She had a house at Fulham, and hither the Prince constantly came while under “the domination of her charms.” But the intercourse between them did not last long, the lady’s coarseness of manners at last thoroughly disgusting her royal admirer, who is said once to have remarked that the only satisfaction he enjoyed in her company was when he shut his eyes and opened his ears.

There seem to have been other points about Mrs. Billington which at last alienated the Prince; nor was he exactly the kind of man she cared for, if we are to believe Huish, who says in this connexion: “Those, who like ourselves are aware of some particular traits in the character of Mrs. Billington, and of the peculiar penchant, which was her ruling passion in her intercourse with her favourites, must be well aware that the Prince of Wales was, notwithstanding his exalted rank

¹ See a letter from Miss Orlebar, dated 1788.

and high personal endowments, not exactly the individual who could long enchain her affections."

From Mrs. Billington the Prince turned to another actress, almost as well known in those days, Mrs. Crouch; and for a time he was her devoted slave, lavishing on her large sums of money, in one instance no less than £10,000, and loading her with gifts of jewels and so forth which he obtained on credit from the compliant Gray of St. James's Street. It is said that it was the inclusion of the sum, about £5,000, expended on these things, in the Prince's schedule of debts, that so disgusted George III., that he refused peremptorily to assist in the payment of his son's commitments.

Unfortunately Mrs. Crouch, with the face and form of an angel, had one great failing—she drank to excess. (George Hanger once compared her throat to a smoky chimney, on account of its foulness.) And at last, after spending immense sums on her, and actually settling on her an annuity of £1200 (which, however, was not recognized subsequently when the Prince's debts were settled previously to his marriage, as it was said that no *valuable consideration* had been received for it) the Prince terminated the liaison, and was free to fly after other fair game.

It has been suggested that the beautiful Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire, was one of those whose favours he sought. But if this was so,

he had in this instance a rival who proved more successful, in the person of Earl Grey ; and the lovely *châtelaine* of Devonshire House, whom he was accustomed to call the best-bred woman in England, was not destined to be numbered among those whose virtue the Prince's graces and blandishments overcame.



CHAPTER IV

GEORGE THE FOURTH (*Continued*)

WE shall have an opportunity later on of recording a conversation, on this very subject of female virtue, between the Prince and Sheridan, which will reveal the estimate of it held by one who had innumerable opportunities for judging. As this interchange of views, however, had a bearing on a special and later case, one or two earlier instances of the Prince's profligacy must first be noted before his connexion with Mrs. Fitzherbert, which took place about this period, is discussed.

The following story actually dates from a time when this beautiful and ill-used lady was supposed to be ruling over the Prince's affections. But it was impossible long to fix him to any one object, however charming and compliant; and it was quite in the early days of his association with the lady who was to become his lawful wife that the circumstance occurred which I am about to narrate.

The Prince had accepted an invitation to dine with one of the Sheriffs of London, in company

with a number of his friends. It happened that the Sheriff's wife was a lady of great personal attractions, among which was a tendency to *embon-point*, which is always known to have had a special fascination for the Prince. After the feast, and before the wine had begun to circulate, the lady left the table, and with her going all interest in the festivity, so far as her royal admirer was concerned, was at an end. But he was not to be balked, so, feigning some sudden indisposition, he also retired, really in search of the fair one. Time elapsed and no prince reappearing, the Sheriff conceived it his duty to go in search of His Royal Highness, fearing, in his innocence, that something untoward had happened to him. There was a variety of rooms in the Sheriff's house to which the Prince might have withdrawn, but the chamber where he actually was in company with the Sheriff's wife was the last that gentleman thought of searching. At last, however, he did go into it, and there he found his guest and the lady.

Furious at the insult to himself under his own roof, the Sheriff drew his sword and rushed at the Prince, who was only able to save himself by instant flight. Rushing downstairs, he gained the garden by a back door, and in the darkness, hearing his pursuer behind him, he sped across it, only to find his way barred by a wall. This, however, he was able to scale, and leaping from

it into blackness, found himself in a heap of dirt and refuse. How he reached his own residence we are not told ; but the story is recorded as a fact by one who was in the Sheriff's employ at the time, and was, indeed, among those who pursued the Prince as he fled across the garden.

It is by no means a pretty story—those connected with profligates and seducers seldom are—but it is hardly, I think, so bad as another in which the ruin of an innocent young girl (and the Sheriff's wife was far from being this) was brought about by the Prince, with the assistance of that abandoned person Lady Lade. The young lady in question was a certain Elizabeth Harrington who lived with her parents on Kew Green, and Lady Lade having wormed her way into their acquaintance, introduced the Prince to the little household as the Hon. Mr. Elliott. By assiduous and persistent machinations the royal libertine gained his object, and the luckless victim died not long after she had been ruined.

Those who read the story of George IV.'s life as given in those biographies which appeared shortly after his death, and in those later ones where his delinquencies are gracefully glossed over, will have a very one-sided view of his character. We are accustomed to think of him in a general way as a corpulent, over-dressed gentleman, with a very pleasant tongue, and parenthetically a tongue attuned to the fascinations of milk-punch.

One visualises him as a sybarite if you will, but rather an amiable one ; a boon-companion bandying jokes with Sheridan and stories with Sir Walter. One knows how he treated Caroline of Brunswick, but then Caroline was not (or was she?—it is a rather moot point) blameless herself, and certainly she was the essence of indiscretion. One knows how he acted a lie with regard to his marriage with Mrs. Fitzherbert ; but then he was after all horribly shackled by state considerations. One knows how he discarded Brummell ; but after all Brummell was an impertinent jackanapes, who traded over-much on his reputation, and thought the Prince was a greater gentleman than he proved to be. And then, George has been held up to so much obloquy for things anyone in his position might have found it difficult to avoid, that one had almost come to regard him as an *homme incompris* ; a prince to whom posterity had done less than justice ; and when Greville said uncomplimentary things about him, and Thackeray held him up to scorn, people began to regard him as being actually ill-used by one who was always so satirical and the other who was always so very much ‘ the gruncher ’ of his day.

When a man has become the subject of much abuse there is always a tendency, especially among a sentimental crowd such as we English are, to try to whitewash him ; to give him the benefit of the doubt—where there is the remotest chance

of finding a doubt ; at last to come to regard him as quite an estimable character. It is an amiable idiosyncrasy, and one with which I find, personally, no fault ; but I confess that, having studied the Prince's character, having as it were looked at the other side of the picture, making all allowances for his actions, his exposed position, his free and easy times, I can find little to praise in him, although I am by no means of those who regard him with bitterness or active dislike. He may have been badly brought up ; he may have been exposed to great temptations, he may have been praised and spoilt to the top of his bent ; but all these things can be predicated of other Princes of Wales who have erred but who have never been accused, as has George, of systematic selfishness, of a determined pursuit of everything that could minister to his own gratifications, irrespective of the feelings of others.

As you read the record of his earlier years you find the milestones of those years inscribed with seductions, drinking-bouts, colossal debts, useless hours given up to pleasure. He was by no means a fool, and among his associates were many who, profligate as they were, were the very reverse of fools ; and so he was able often enough, especially in his quarrels with his father and mother, to act so clever and tactful a part as frequently to put them apparently in the wrong. He possessed great affection for his brother, the Duke of York,

and, for an unusually lengthy period, a kind of constancy to Mrs. Fitzherbert. But it was that sort of constancy which asked for absolute freedom for himself in his relations with other women. He was often maudlin to the verge of idiocy, and would weep, and tear his hair, and roll on the ground on occasions—the occasions when, like a spoiled child, he could not get what he wanted or was disappointed with what he had. Thackeray has, by some, been accused of unfairness in his delineation of his character, and I think him over severe, but after all he is stating but the truth when he writes :

“ To make a portrait of him at first seemed a matter of small difficulty. There is his coat, his star, his wig, his countenance simpering under it. And yet after reading of him in scores of volumes, hunting him through old magazines and newspapers, having him here at a ball, there at a public dinner, there at races and so forth, you find you have nothing—nothing but a coat and a wig and a mask smiling below it—nothing but a great simulacrum. . . . I look through all his life, and recognize but a bow and a grin. I try to take him to pieces, and find silk stockings, padding, stays, a coat with frogs and a fur collar, one of Truefitt’s best nutty brown wigs reeking with oil. . . . I know of no sentiment that he ever distinctly uttered. Documents are published under his name, but people wrote them—private letters, but people

spelt them. He put a great George P or George R at the bottom of the page and fancied he had written the paper: some bookseller's clerk, some poor author, some *man* did the work; saw to the spelling, cleaned up the slovenly sentences, and gave the lax maudlin slipslop a sort of consistency."

Thackeray knew, in those days, far more about George's doings than we have been allowed to know; and beneath this fulmination is the fury of one against outraged virtue and sullied innocence; of one who was not to be hoodwinked by specious phrases or a charming manner, nor overwhelmed by the glare and glitter of a meretricious splendour.

There was at that time a certain Lady Archer who besides being an inveterate gambler (she kept a quasi-public faro table) was otherwise notable for the viciousness of her conduct. She had once been under the protection of Mr. Errington, a cousin of Mrs. Fitzherbert, and it was through him that the Prince of Wales was introduced to her house, for gambling and other purposes. She had three daughters, the youngest of whom was unmarried, and there is little doubt that the mother used her child's beauty as a decoy for many to whom female charms were even a greater inducement than cards or dice.

No sooner did the Prince of Wales see the young lady than he fell in love with her. As, however,

he was generally accompanied to Lady Archer's house by Mr. Errington, and as Mrs. Fitzherbert had now become the *maitresse en titre*, a good deal of circumspection was necessary to prevent his admiration for Miss Archer from reaching the ears of that lady. In order to effect his purpose he sought the aid of the Hon. Mrs. Hobart, who agreed to give a *bal masqué* at her villa at Fulham, where the Prince, disguised, should have an opportunity of declaring his passion to Miss Archer. The *fête* was given on June 27th, 1791, and from a contemporary account of it we learn that not only were the Prince and many notable people (the Duchesses of Gordon and Rutland, the Duke of Queensberry—Old Q—and many others among them) present, but Mrs. Fitzherbert herself. Miss Archer was dressed as a Savoyard ; and the Prince as a Bohemian nobleman was observed to pay her marked and constant attention ; but the young lady exhibited a surprising virtue in the daughter of such a mother, and withstood successfully all the royal protestations and blandishments. Such a repulse acted as a stimulus to the royal desires ; and although baffled for a time he determined that nothing should interfere with his ultimate success. Indeed, on the following day, in the course of the very curious conversation on the subject of female virtue which he had with Sheridan, to which I have already alluded and of which I shall give a *résumé* later, he swore the girl should

be his, although he had but just received back from her a present he had sent her and had, on his own shewing, found her "reserved and coy."

That very evening Mrs. Hobart was his hostess at *her* faro table ; and having conducted him into one of her private rooms, she told him that Miss Archer should be his if he would pay the price. The Prince could not believe it, and said so, but the lady proceeded to affirm that she had arranged the matter with Lady Archer, although, as she confessed, at a high price, the terms being £500 a year for life for the mother and £1000 a year for the victim. "And upon the fulfilment of these terms," said the Prince, "Lady Archer consents to sacrifice her child? . . . Then," he added, "I renounce the business altogether. Whatever may be my libertine propensities, never shall posterity have to record of me that I could stoop to the infamy of bartering with a mother for the ruin of her daughter. . . . Tell Lady Archer that the Prince of Wales in future declines her further acquaintance."

It is pleasant to be able to record this correct attitude on the part of one of whom so much that is anything but correct can be predicated, and it is satisfactory to know that at least for a time the Prince refused to visit either Lady Archer or Mrs. Hobart.

The loss to these ladies' faro tables by the withdrawal of the royal favour was very great ; so

great, indeed, that they cast about for some new paragon whose beauty would be sufficient to break down his determination. At last one was found in a certain Lucy Howard ; and she proved less recalcitrant than had Miss Archer. A house some three miles from Brighton was taken for her, and here she is said to have given birth to a boy—called George Howard, who, however, only lived till his second year, and was buried in Brighton Churchyard. The Prince was wont to visit her after dark, and was generally accompanied in these excursions from the Pavilion by Lord Rawdon. These nocturnal visits came to the ears of the notorious Lady Jersey, who had already fascinated the Prince and exercised, with Mrs. Fitzherbert, a dual sovereignty over his affections—although this sovereignty did not prevent him from seeking occasional amusement elsewhere. Lady Jersey was an imperious and jealous woman, far less easy-going and complacent than Mrs. Fitzherbert indeed, and she determined to have the Prince watched and traced to the mysterious assignation she had discovered he was keeping. For this purpose she employed a young stable-boy to shadow his Royal Highness, and this the youth so successfully accomplished that he encountered the Prince on the premises where Lucy Howard was hidden. Furious at finding himself the victim of what he took to be vulgar curiosity, the Prince caught the boy and thrashed him so

unmercifully that the latter was rendered a cripple to the end of his life ; and had not the best surgical aid been forthcoming, would in all probability have succumbed to his injuries. The boy lived for twelve years after this event, in receipt of a pension of £50 from the Prince. But the affair had another result. The details came out, and Lucy Howard was obliged to leave her Sussex home, which became a daily object for sightseers and sensation-mongers. She withdrew to the neighbourhood of Richmond, and thither she was soon followed by her royal lover. It is said that in Richmond Park there was once to be seen a tree on which the initials G.P. and L.H. were cut ; “ a memorial,” we are told, “ of the happy hours the two spent under its shade.” ¹

A royal prince is regarded by a certain type of female as almost fair game, if they can by hook or by crook come before his notice ; and those who pursued the Prince, as distinguished from those he pursued, were numerous enough if not so habitually successful in enchaining his fleeting affections. One of these was the once beautiful Mrs. Bristow. This lady of easy ethics had apparently cause to complain of Mrs. Fitzherbert’s disdainful attitude towards her, and it may have been as much in revenge for some affront at the hands of the latter as for any other reason that

¹ I do not vouch for this, never having seen the tree ; but I remember to have heard a similar story told of George III. and Hannah Lightfoot—G.P. and *H.L.* !

she carried on an intrigue with the Prince, with a determination and success certainly worthy of a better cause.

But Mrs. Fitzherbert had reason for jealousy in another direction, or rather thought she had, for, as it happened, she was wholly mistaken, and her error gave the Prince an opportunity of posing as the injured innocent (an unusual *rôle*), of which he made good use.

Among Mrs. Fitzherbert's friends was a Miss Paget, whose character and reputation were above suspicion but who was beautiful enough to attract the Prince. Nor did he fail to make an attempt to seduce her, but without the slightest success. It, however, became known to Mrs. Fitzherbert that a secret correspondence had for some time been going on between the two; and so certain was she that it was of a criminal nature, that to make assurance doubly sure she found means to intercept one of the young lady's letters. This was couched in equivocal terms, and might have convinced a less jealous woman than Mrs. Fitzherbert that her surmise was correct.

The following day Miss Paget was informed that her intimacy with her friend was at an end. Surprised at such an intimation she sought an interview with Mrs. Fitzherbert, but was refused admittance, and in her dilemma she asked the Prince to find out what the cause of the quarrel was and to intercede for her.

Mrs. Fitzherbert received him in a fury of voluble accusation, and after he had allowed it to spend itself, he gently informed the lady that Miss Paget had been an intermediary between him and some of her rich relatives, with regard to a loan of money of which he was then (as for the matter of that he nearly always was) in the utmost need, and that when she wrote that she regretted "that it was not in her power to comply with the wishes of his Royal Highness to their full extent" (a passage which had aroused Mrs. Fitzherbert's suspicions), and when further she wrote that "secrecy in matters of this kind is of the greatest moment," not love but lucre was the subject of her story.

This incident is said to have caused a breach between the Prince and his lawful wife, and was the reason for his retiring into the country for a time, where he lived at Bagshot Park, Kempshott Park, and the Grange in Hampshire, and Crichel in Dorset, and indulged in some of those hunting experiences in which he acquitted himself creditably enough, but of which, as was his wont with most things, he soon tired.

A little while ago I referred to a conversation on the subject of female virtue which took place between the Prince and Sheridan. An account of this was found among the papers of Colonel Hanger, afterwards Lord Coleraine, and was incorporated in Huish's *Life* of George IV. The

author of that work, in introducing the subject, takes occasion to remark that : “ If opinions were always the criterion of, or a clue to, the development of human character, we should consider ourselves liable to censure if we suppressed a tittle of any conversation in which a man exhibited himself in his real, unsophisticated colours, by an unreserved disclosure of his sentiments ; but with the knowledge which we possess of the real opinions the Prince entertained of the existence and the strength of female virtue, we are certain that any estimate which an individual might be tempted to draw of the Prince’s real character, from the sentiments expressed on this occasion, would be one of error and misconception.”

The conversation thus referred to occurred just after Miss Archer had returned the present which the Prince had sent her.

“ Sheridan,” said he, laying the package on the table, “ what is your opinion of the strength of female virtue ? ”

“ It is the brightest pearl in the diadem of a woman,” answered Sheridan ; “ and when supported by modesty, truth, and religion, it is a rock in the ocean, against which all the waves may dash in vain : but, on the other hand, when once an impression has been made upon it, under the influence of passion, it is like the frost-work of an autumnal morning, which is dissolved with the first ardent beam that falls upon it.”

“Do you think,” asked the Prince, “that there is any female virtue that cannot be overcome?”

(“Sheridan,” said Hanger, “let his Royal Highness answer his own question. I know no one more able. An individual who has travelled a road five hundred times, and stopped at every house that presented itself, must be able to give a correct account of them.”)

“But suppose,” said the Prince, “that the individual was refused admission to some of them; would it be fair to pass an opinion of the character of their inmates, according to that which you may have formed of those into whose houses you may have been admitted?”

“It would be illiberal in the extreme,” said Sheridan.

“Then, by the same parity of reasoning,” said the Prince, “it would be illiberal in me to pass a general opinion of the strength of female virtue from my own single experience.”

“There is a great deal of sophistry in that remark,” said Sheridan; “for, is not the most valuable part of our knowledge founded on experience? And therefore, let the subject be what it may, that man must be the wisest who has had the greatest experience in it; and who will dispute the experience of your Royal Highness in everything relative to the character of woman?”

“But in which I am still a fool,” said the Prince, “and of that fact Archer’s daughter has

just now convinced me. She has given me a lesson to read which I never studied before. But to repeat my question—do you believe that there is any female virtue existing which cannot be overcome—I mean, supposing that it has been subjected to every temptation and every ordeal which the most fertile ingenuity can devise? ”

“ Most undoubtedly,” replied Sheridan, “ and I should be very sorry to hold a contrary opinion. I believe in the existence of a pure unsullied female virtue, with the same religious certainty as I do, according to the dictates of my moral sense, in the existence of right and wrong.”

“ I dispute not the existence of it, nor ever did,” said the Prince, “ its very destruction presupposes that it did once exist ; for that can never be destroyed which had no previous reality—but it is the fact of its invincibility that I wish to have established.”

“ Then look to Lucretia, your Royal Highness,” said Sheridan.

“ A solitary instance,” said the Prince, “ which history has treasured up, to show us a phenomenon ; but let me state a case to you—supposing a woman were to present herself before you, gifted, with all the beauty which invests the female with irresistible power, and you found that the possession of that beauty was not to be obtained by the ordinary means of seduction, what would then be your opinion, and how would you act? ”

“ I would let her alone,” said Sheridan, “ and hold her as a sacred thing.”

“ And declare it to the world,” said the Prince, “ that her virtue was invincible ? ”

“ Certainly,” said Sheridan, “ as far as the means that have been employed to overcome it.”

“ That virtue is still but negative, in my opinion,” said the Prince ; “ for a fortunate expedient might still effect its conquest.”

“ Before, however,” said Sheridan, “ I pronounce a virtue as incorruptible, invincible, I am supposed to believe that *every* expedient has been tried, even the scarcely resistible expedient of a deeply-rooted, passionate attachment ; for, if a girl falls not to *that*, I would fearlessly expose her to every other temptation which the utmost ingenuity of man could devise. I consider the contemplation of a woman, strong, firm, unconquerable in her virtue, to be one of the world’s finest spectacles.”

“ What is mere contemplation ? ” said the Prince ; “ I can look at the stars, and admire them in their glory ; but how am I benefited by that contemplation ? There is no sensual gratification.”

“ Certainly not,” said Sheridan ; “ but there is a pleasing sensation conveyed to the mind by the contemplation of any beautiful or sublime object.”

“ *Apropos*,” said the Prince, “ speaking of the contemplation of a beautiful object, I have been very much struck with a singular remark of Dr.

Darwin's, wherein he says, that the delight which the eye of man experiences in the contemplation of a female bosom, arises from the association that it is the source from which we drew our first sustenance."

"Indeed?" said Sheridan, with a smile. "Then why do we not feel the same delight at the contemplation of *a wooden spoon*?"

"Excellent!" exclaimed the Prince, "excellent! In future I shall never see a beautiful bosom but I shall think of Sheridan's wooden spoon. Nevertheless, you must allow that contemplation is one thing, enjoyment another; and to which would you give the preference?"

"To each," said Sheridan, "in its own individuality; but they are as distinct in their natures as they are different in the effects that are produced. The contemplation of a beautiful woman, abstractedly speaking, depends entirely in its degree of delight upon the power which we possess of actually determining what beauty is—the mere question of enjoyment may be decided by a Caliban, to whom sense is everything—mind nothing. There is, however, another point to be taken into consideration, which is, that there is *one* sense which nature has implanted in the heart of every female, and on the facility or difficulty of the suppression or suspension of that sense, the great question may be determined of the strength or weakness of her virtue."

“ And what is that sense ? ” asked the Prince.

Here the conversation turned on the subject of Miss Archer. After having heard the Prince’s account of how he had met her and had been repulsed, Sheridan gave it as his opinion that she was not destined to become one of his royal friend’s victims. “ That girl,” he concluded, “ I say, will never be yours, sir.” “ By G—d ! but she shall be,” exclaimed the Prince.

We have seen how Sheridan’s words came true ; but it is only fair to state that, as I have shewn, it was the Prince himself who refused to be one party to the sacrifice, on learning that the intended victim’s unnatural mother was another.

It was Sheridan who once remarked that the Prince was too much every lady’s man to be the man of any lady. Like most aphorisms it was but a half truth. For there is no doubt that Mrs. Fitzherbert regarded him in every sense, as in actual fact he was, as her husband ; and her fits of jealousy, as in the case of Miss Paget, and even more so in the case of Lady Jersey, possessed the elements of those of an outraged spouse rather than of a temporarily discarded mistress.

In the following chapter something must be said concerning the relations of George Prince of Wales and Mrs. Fitzherbert, although so much has been written on the subject that only a slight sketch is all that seems needed, and is all I shall attempt to give.



CHAPTER V

GEORGE THE FOURTH (*Continued*)

THE connection between the Prince of Wales and Mrs. Fitzherbert differed materially from those *liaisons* which I have already recorded, or those which he formed at a later period of his life. In the first place Mrs. Fitzherbert was a lady of unblemished morals, which is more than can be said of most of the fair and frail ones who fell a prey, a willing prey, to the overtures of Prince Charming. Unlike most of these, too, she was of good family, and although a familiar association with the Heir Apparent no doubt had some power to dazzle her, she occupied a station, both by birth and marriage, which ensured her from being overwhelmed by a questionable honour, and a natural strength of mind which prevented her acceding to the Prince's advances except under such conditions as gave it at least a quasi propriety. She insisted, when her obduracy had at last been overcome, on marriage ; and although she must have known that a marriage in this case was little better than an empty ceremony, it seems

to have salved her conscience, and it certainly gave her a position, not only with regard to his Royal Highness but with other members of his family, to which none other of his favourites could for a moment aspire.

When the Prince went through that ceremony¹ it is probable that he felt more honourably towards Mrs. Fitzherbert than he had towards any other woman ; it is certainly a fact that she exercised the best influence to which he had ever been exposed, and there seems no reason to doubt that, in spite of the other tie he was forced to submit to by pressure of circumstances and State expediency, it was she whom he always regarded, as she regarded herself, as his lawful wife.

Everyone knows how for many years, down to our own day, the fact of a marriage ceremony having been gone through was questioned. During the lifetime of the Prince and the lady it was positively denied in Parliament that such a marriage had ever taken place ; and although it was generally regarded as certain that the two had been joined together with the blessing of the Church, it was not till the late Mr. W. H. Wilkins was given access to the Royal papers which established the fact, and produced his authoritative work on the life of Mrs. Fitzherbert, that

¹ There is extant an interesting caricature of the marriage, in which Fox is shown giving the lady away, and Hanger standing behind ; while Lord North, dressed as a coachman, is lying characteristically asleep and leaning on the altar rails.

the world was at last unquestionably satisfied that George Prince of Wales and Mrs. Fitzherbert were husband and wife.

So much has been written directly and indirectly in this connexion, and on the career of the lady herself, that it is not necessary here to trouble ourselves with many circumstances connected with both which are, thus, well known already, and concerning which the numerous authorities are easily obtainable by those anxious for precise dates and pedigrees, and the rest of it.

Mrs. Fitzherbert, I may, however, state, was originally a Miss Smythe, a relation of Sir Edward Smythe of Acton Burnel in Shropshire, a connexion of the Earls of Sefton, and a member of a family of ancient origin. She was educated partly in England and partly in France, and was by religion a Roman Catholic. When quite young she was married to Mr. Weld of Lulworth Castle, a scion of one of the wealthiest and most important Roman Catholic families in England; and had thus begun life in a position equal to many, and superior to more, of the titled families of the land. Her first husband having died, she married secondly Mr. Fitzherbert of Swinnerton, a connexion which added to her dignity, and, on his death, to her wealth; and when she first attracted the notice of the Prince she was a person of importance, and to a man only less than royal might have been considered, in every respect, a desirable *partie*.

At this time she was a very beautiful young woman, with a tendency, however, to that *embon-point* which, as I have already shewn, had a special attraction for George. The two first met in Lady Sefton's box at the Opera, and the Prince was at once smitten with her charms of person and manner, and, as they say in another connexion, testified the same in the usual manner. But Mrs. Fitzherbert was a very different person from Mrs. Robinson and the other moth-like creatures who had allowed their wings to be singed in the flame of royal passion; and when the Prince declared himself unequivocally, she would have nothing to say to his suggestions. The Prince, who was unaccustomed to refusals, although he had at least one experience of them in the case of Miss Archer, became the more insistent; and, indeed, so vehemently did he plead that Mrs. Fitzherbert, having no wish to become a royal mistress when she could aspire, if not to a royal at least to a noble connexion on honourable terms, took the extreme measure of leaving the country and settling at Plombiers, in order to be rid of her admirer's importunities, or, as some have suggested, not quite fairly, as I think, to sharpen the royal appetite still further by removing the fruit temporarily out of his reach.

Scandal, ever ready handmaid to Envy, produced in this instance one of her many falsehoods, and

in a pamphlet issued at this time on the subject the following passage occurs: "At Plombiers, Mrs. Fitzherbert contracted an intimacy with the Marquis de Bellois, acknowledged to be one of the handsomest men in France, with whom she withdrew for some time, and lived in the greatest familiarity. The consequence of this intercourse was the necessity of retiring to Paris, where, by means of two of her friends, the scandalous transaction was industriously concealed."

The author of this statement called himself 'Nemesis,' and he further asserts that Mrs. Fitzherbert's return to England was urged by Mr. Bouverie, and her cousin Mr. Errington, because they found that the Prince had sent over emissaries to discover her whereabouts in France, and it was feared that if they persisted in their enquiries, this circumstance might come to the Prince's ears. He proceeds further as thus:

"In the winter of 1788 the Marquis de Bellois came to England, and became known to the Prince. Mrs. Fitzherbert fearing a discovery, spoke of him as a man unworthy of the Prince's acquaintance, which coming to the ears of the Marquis, he was so piqued, that he demanded the two thousand pounds which she had borrowed from him. She refused to pay him, unless he gave up her letters, with her notes of hand, which on his part was refused also. She then sent Anthony St. Leger and Weltjie (who, by the by, although he filled

the menial situation of cook in his Royal Highness' establishment, appears to have been employed in some matters of a very delicate nature) to negotiate for her ; and after much debating, by means of the Abbé Séchamp, the matter was compromised for two hundred pounds, but the letters were not given up, some of which contained matter highly disgraceful to the Prince of Wales, and some of the secrets were afterwards divulged by her brother, Walter Smythe, whom she had ill-treated, but a stop was put to the promulgation of any further secrets on his part by a large sum of money. Immense sums were lavished on her in trinkets ; and the expenses of puffing paragraphs in her favour, and of suppressing others against her, amounted to an enormous sum."

I have quoted this to shew to what lengths malignity can go ; but the whole thing bears on its face traces of inherent improbability : so far as the intercourse with the Marquis de Bellois is concerned, in the known character of Mrs. Fitzherbert ; so far as the suggestion of her having borrowed money goes, in the fact that she was a rich widow and had no necessity to borrow money from anyone, much less to be unable or unwilling to repay, had she ever had some urgent occasion in a foreign land, to do so.

On her return to England, Mrs. Fitzherbert found the Prince's passion in no way abated, and as she was firm the Prince offered to marry her

if she would but consent to be his. The marriage took place, Fox and Mr. Errington being among the few friends at the ceremony. But a position of immense difficulty arose. On constitutional grounds such a marriage could not be regarded as legal, especially as one of the parties was a Roman Catholic, and the public attitude against the members of that faith, which had been exhibited then comparatively recently in the excesses of the Gordon Riots, made it still more dangerous for the Crown to allow even a suggestion to leak out that such a ceremony had taken place.

There were many even at the time, however, who were quite persuaded that it had, and Horne Tooke published a pamphlet in which he declared that the marriage was a fact and that he was acquainted with the name of the clergyman who had officiated; and he goes on to prove that Mrs. Fitzherbert had become *ipso facto* Princess of Wales, by which title he addresses her throughout his lucubration.

We now know the whole truth of the matter and have no need to rack our brains as to whether or not Mrs. Fitzherbert was the Prince's wedded wife. To the world she allowed herself to figure simply as his mistress; to those behind the scenes no disguise was possible or necessary; and when the unfortunate Caroline of Brunswick came over to become the real Princess of Wales, the actions of both that lady and the Prince should be judged

by the fact that he had already a wife, and that she knew it. In ordinary circumstances George would have been indicted for bigamy, but royal people are shackled by all sorts of disabilities, and so all one can say is that in the eyes of the Church he had two wives ; in those of the State but one. No more complex or unfortunate circumstance can ever have fallen to the lot of a future King of England. For even Henry VIII., who may be regarded almost as a martyr to marriage, at least took care to disembarass himself of one wife before he wedded another. George, Prince of Wales, was so unfortunate that when he acted immorally he was wrong ; when he acted morally, he was worse. Poor unfortunate victim to his passions : his morality in this instance was due to his own desires and to the firmness of the lady for whom he had conceived so fatal an infatuation !

There is, however, no doubt that the union between the Prince and Mrs. Fitzherbert was, in many respects, a most advantageous circumstance for the former, however much it may have placed the latter in a false position in the eyes of the world at large : “ Amongst the immediate friends of the Prince,” we are told, “ there were many who regarded his connexion with Mrs. Fitzherbert as an event rather to be rejoiced at than regretted, for however irregular it might have been in its nature, it had still a tendency to withdraw

him from the disgraces, and preserve him from the consequences, of vulgar debauchery.”

This was doubtless the case. The lady exercised often enough a restraining hand on his vagaries ; she kept him, at least for a time, more or less decent in his behaviour ; and although even his regard (and he really, I believe, had a greater regard for her than for any other woman) was not proof against occasional infidelities during their life together—the cases of Lucy Howard and Lady Jersey, *inter alia*, may be cited—yet in the matter of drinking and playing those many mad pranks in which he had so often previously indulged, her persuasions were often sufficiently powerful to keep him more dignified or at least more discreet.

Mrs. Fitzherbert’s position was recognized by many of the outstanding members of the nobility, and the Duchess of Devonshire, the Duchess of Bedford, and many others of equal position received her with every mark of cordiality ; while many of the royal family regarded her as in some way, if not exactly one of themselves, at least one with whom they were pleased to be on terms of familiarity. There is no doubt, however, that during the earlier period of the Prince’s relations with Mrs. Fitzherbert all sorts of intrigues were set on foot in other directions to undermine her influence over his Royal Highness ; not only were scandalous stories told about her, but pamphlets as full of false anecdotes as those which assailed the repu-

tation of Marie Antoinette were published ; and it is quite obvious that when, on one occasion, she was arrested for debt at her home in Tilney Street, the Prince being in the place at the time, it was due to a plot concocted by her enemies. It was, indeed, only by sending to Carlton House for a case containing the Prince's State jewels that the Sheriff's officers were got rid of ; they having refused to allow any of Mrs. Fitzherbert's jewels or plate to be removed, although a Mr. Parker, pawnbroker, of Fleet Street, who had been summoned, expressed himself ready to advance the amount required, £1,825, on this security.

Although, as I have said, certain members of the royal family looked with a kindly and tolerant eye on Mrs. Fitzherbert, Queen Charlotte was not among the number, and when the lady once appeared in the Royal Box at the trial of Warren Hastings, the outraged queen, throwing a baleful look at the intruder, immediately arose and left Westminster Hall, subsequently writing the Prince a letter of expostulation, in which this passage occurs : " The very ambiguous and mysterious relation in which the Prince of Wales stands in regard to the lady in question, will always have its becoming weight in the mind of the Queen, to prevent her acknowledging her, or any of her associates, at the Court over which she presides."

It is said that on receiving this missive the Prince, in a sudden access of fury, tore the letter

in pieces and stamped on them. Later, however, with the help of Sheridan, he sent his mother a clever and well concocted reply, which the Queen in a final epistle termed "wholly evasive," and added that unless she received an assurance that the insult should not be repeated, she was "under the painful necessity of declining to see the Prince of Wales;" in other words, formally dismissing him from her Court.

Not long after this, occurred the incident of Miss Paget, already recorded; and the attitude adopted by Mrs. Fitzherbert on this occasion caused a coolness between the Prince and his wife which may, perhaps, be taken as the beginning of their gradual estrangement—an estrangement completed when the Prince was forced into that disastrous *mariage de convenance* with Caroline of Brunswick, which may be regarded as the most unfortunate episode in his career.

Mrs. Fitzherbert's influence over the Prince remained, however, for an unusually lengthy period, very strong. To her he really was more attached by an honourable feeling of regard and even affection than he had been, or was to be, to any other woman. During his connexion with her he had, as we know, experienced passing phases of passion for others, but they were only passing, and ever and again he returned to her, chained by some subtle feeling which he exhibited to no one else. When his marriage was imminent Mrs.

Fitzherbert's conduct was dignified and circum-spect; and it is a significant fact that the new Princess of Wales always spoke of her in friendly terms—although she must have known well enough the real relations that existed between her and the Prince.

That Mrs. Fitzherbert herself looked upon the *official* marriage of George as a disaster goes without saying. It is difficult to understand what she supposed would happen sometime in the future with regard to one who, as heir to the throne, would naturally be exposed to all sorts of attempts to land him into a royal or quasi-royal matrimonial engagement. Perhaps she imagined that the Prince would hesitate to contract an alliance at all, after he had actually gone through the ceremony of marriage with her. She may have visualised herself and him in the future living as man and wife, although, of course, she knew that she could never be Princess of Wales. Or did she dream that after the death of George III. and Queen Charlotte even this might be brought to pass? It is impossible to say exactly what she adumbrated in her splendid bow-windowed house in Park Lane, with her quasi-royal *entourage*, her scarlet liveries, and her devoted royal slave.

The fact remains that when she was awakened from this dream, if she ever dreamed it, her attitude was at once discreet and correct; and in London as at Brighton she demeaned herself

in a way wholly consistent with her birth and the position to which she had attained as the lawful wife of the Prince of Wales. Her position had, indeed, become an almost untenable one ; but she continued to hold it. After the new marriage she had consented to discontinue her intimacy with the Prince, although, as a contemporary writer puts it, "she was conscious that she possessed a prior claim to the hand and bed of his Royal Highness, and that she had been deprived of the one, and alienated from the other, by an act of mere state policy, which condemned him to the thralldom of a public marriage which was repugnant to his own feelings, and to which his heart was most decidedly opposed."

That, subsequently to this official alliance, Mrs. Fitzherbert consented again to resume her intercourse with her husband may be open to censure, but considering the intimate relations between the two, and the sacred character of those relations in view of a real marriage, it can hardly be matter for surprise, especially as the Prince made no secret of his dislike for his other wife who was, except officially, after the first few days, but a wife in name.

Perhaps no one has been placed in a more peculiar and invidious position than was Mrs. Fitzherbert. She had refused to become the mistress of the Prince unless their intimacy should be blessed by the Church. The Prince had consented to this,

and for all practical purposes had made her his wife. Both must have known that they were laying up trouble for themselves. But both really loved each other : on the lady's part with a certain glamour cast by such an association ; on the Prince's part by a passionate desire which brooked no obstacles and which became later a regard and affectionate respect which endured, it must be remembered to his credit, all his life. Many princes have no doubt been confronted with this difficult problem ; it was George who overcame it partially ; but at length even he was beaten by its real insolubility.

The Princess who was selected as the future Queen of England, and whom the Prince at last, on promise that his enormous debts should be paid if he would but *rangé* himself (a promise, by the way, not fulfilled to the letter, by any means), was a niece of George III., who was the prime mover in this alliance. The question of the succession to the Crown was one which had, for a considerable time, agitated the King and Queen as well as the Ministry. All sorts of tempting offers had been made to the Prince in order to induce him to take a wife and produce heirs in the direct line. Hitherto he had always replied that from the knowledge he had of his own character he was satisfied that he was not fitted for the marriage state, an assertion that few could deny ; and he regarded any legitimate union as

one likely to be disastrous to both parties to the contract. How true this proved is known only too well. When, however, his financial position became so acute, in spite of the retrenchments he had himself initiated and a long withdrawal into quasi-privacy, as to have reached a crisis, it was understood that relief could be obtained on one condition ; and that in short if he married, his debts would be paid, his allowance largely increased, a sum would be set apart for the completion of Carlton House, and generally that he would be financially whitewashed.

The choice lay, apparently, between two of the Prince's cousins, one a niece of Queen Charlotte, the other a niece of King George ; and the latter was ultimately selected. A portrait of the young lady, Caroline, daughter of the Duke and Duchess of Brunswick, was shown to the Prince who (like Henry VIII. in the case of Anne of Cleves) found her not unattractive, and on the advice of Fox, whom he consulted in the matter, he consented to a formal application for her hand being made on his behalf.

It was from the first an ill-omened project. The Prince was already a married man, and besides the charms of Mrs. Fitzherbert, was much under the domination of Lady Jersey, as well as of other less despotic but even more alluring beauties. The Princess, on her part, was really in love with a German Prince, a fact she had the imprudence,

later, to confess to no less interested a person in doing her harm than Lady Jersey herself. There is no doubt that apart from the unpropitious circumstances attending this match it was Lady Jersey who, having gained a curiously strong ascendancy over George, did her best by all sorts of stratagems and intrigues to make it a permanent failure.

On April 5th, 1795, the Princess Caroline arrived at Greenwich, and Lady Jersey, of all people in the world, was deputed to receive her. The attitude of this lady can be judged from the fact that she did not appear at Greenwich till after the Princess, who was thus kept over an hour awaiting her arrival! On reaching St. James's the Princess was introduced to the Prince who, according to Lord Malmesbury's well-known account, was so agitated at the meeting that he was obliged to call for a glass of brandy to steady his nerves—nerves which deep potations had already greatly overstrained. Lady Jersey took an early opportunity of apprising him of Caroline's ill-timed confidence about her German lover; she did more: she ridiculed her manners; pointed out all sorts of failings in her appearance and conduct, predicted that the marriage would be unfortunate; and ended by telling the Prince that "she was persuaded that the Princess loved one little finger of that individual (the German prince) far better than she would love the whole person of the Prince of Wales."

It has been well remarked that "the effects of the machinations of this female fiend were immediate and baneful, for on the following day, when the Prince of Wales visited St. James's, he was distant and reserved in his manners, and manifested if not a decided aversion for the Princess of Brunswick, at least such a marked alteration in his conduct, that it was observed by all present, and augured little for the happiness of the intended union." "Queen Charlotte," it is added, "has been accused of having been the individual who effected, or contributed to effect, such alteration ; but the charge is without foundation. The malicious and artful Lady Jersey was the principal, if not the sole, cause."

The marriage ceremony took place on April 8th, 1795, and the ill-assorted pair spent the first days of their married life at Carlton House. It was, however, not long before the Princess learnt many details of the Prince's career which had hitherto been carefully kept from her ; among them being the fact that Mrs. Fitzherbert was the real wife, she herself but the nominal, or official, one.

The conduct of Caroline has received, and in many respects has deserved, much censure. She was to prove flighty and volatile and amazingly indiscreet. But she was young, she was among strangers, she was surrounded by spies and tale-bearers whose interest it was to widen the breach they had already made between her and her

egregious husband. Quarrels, as was but to be expected, soon occurred. Having opened her heart to Lady Jersey, and then having discovered the kind of woman she was and the position she occupied in the affections of the Prince, Caroline naturally turned from her with horror and loathing; and one day she told the Prince that she absolutely refused to dine with Lady Jersey when he was not present, or to speak to her on any occasion whatever. George, whose good manners were always on exhibition to anyone but his wife, demanded that she should treat Lady Jersey as his friend, dine with her at all times, and in fact act towards her as she would to any other of her ladies in waiting. The Princess not only refused, but demanded the dismissal of the mistress; and the furious Prince, unable to bend his young wife to his will and get her to consort with his chief concubine, left Carlton House in a fury.

The Princess appealed to the King—the one person who was habitually kind and affectionate to her. He interfered, and the quarrel was, at least outwardly, adjusted; but it was only for a short time; and before long Lady Jersey's empire was as firmly established as ever, and George remained for the rest of the Princess's life, but a husband in name.

There is no necessity, here, to follow the fortune of the royal pair, as it unfolded itself during the ensuing years. If there is one fact well known

about the life of George IV. it is his conduct to his wife ; if there is one thing well known about that wife it is her misfortune in being allied to a thorough-paced rake, and one who was in many aspects of his career a blackguard of the first water. Their perpetual quarrels ; their interchange of letters (so many of which find themselves printed in contemporary records) ; the cumulative indignities to which the Princess was exposed ; her indiscretions ; her retirement to Italy where those indiscretions took on a more serious aspect ; her return and trial with all its unsavoury details about Bergami and the rest ; her pathetic attempt to be present at the Coronation at which by every known law she had a right to take the second place ; her sad and lonely death ; all these things, with so much which has an essential bearing on her conduct and untoward fate, may be read in such innumerable books and pamphlets—strictures and *apologia* and carefully considered judgments—that we may, here, leave any further consideration of the Princess Caroline of Brunswick, rightfully Queen Caroline of England.

The *dictum* of posterity will, it is probable, never quite satisfactorily prove whether she was or was not an erring woman ; what history can, however, at least say of her is that, very indiscreet, rather frivolous, curiously determined on many points as she undoubtedly was, she was above all things an ill-used and much slandered woman. She was

indicted for certain crimes and misdemeanours, and the charges were withdrawn ; she placed her case before the judgment of the people, and although she was a foreigner, the people espoused her cause. She may have sinned (some think she did), but she suffered much, and there can be no shadow of doubt that her errors were due to the abominable treatment she received when she came to this country to be the bride of the Heir Apparent, and instead of finding the Prince Charming of legend, found herself handed over to a voluptuary surrounded by harlots and panders, and received the supreme insult of being made to consort with the most impudent and vilest of them. If there is one being in this whole unsavoury and pitiable story who deserves our loathing more than the Prince of Wales it is his shameless mistress, Lady Jersey. And of Lady Jersey, and others, something must be said in the following chapters.



CHAPTER VI

GEORGE THE FOURTH (*Continued*)

CARLTON House “may be looked upon, at this time, as a Pandora’s box, filled with treachery and vice. The immediate associates of the Prince, male and female, were persons distinguished for their immorality of conduct, their licentiousness and debauchery. Scenes of the most indecent nature were daily and nightly practised under its roof, which, as it was now the residence of a virtuous wife and a mother, ought to have been uncontaminated by the presence of the harlot or the libertine.”

With this strong condemnation does a contemporary annalist introduce some of those who filled the parts of panders or of queens of the harem to George, Prince of Wales. Of some of these I shall have occasion to speak later on, and Lady Jersey will be found to take a foremost place among them. But before saying anything of this titled *hetaira*, the connexion of the Prince with one or two other ladies of easy ethics should be noted.

Among these was Miss Bolton, at that time a favourite actress and one much run after by young men of fashion. Her naïve and ingenuous manners were her chief asset, and they appealed forcibly to the now rather jaded taste of the Prince of Wales. She was, however, not only circumspect in her conduct, but was carefully guarded by her mother ; and the panders of the Prince, in spite of all kinds of ingenious scheming, were luckily unable to compass her ruin. Every artifice was tried in vain, and the ardour of the Prince only increased when it found itself confronted by what seemed insuperable difficulties. It so happened that Miss Bolton was engaged by the Manager of the Windsor Theatre (probably this was part of the plot to overcome her resistance), and on going to the royal town she found a certain Mrs. Hall very anxious to make her acquaintance. This lady was really the mistress of a Mr. Sykes, but was known and even visited by titled people, so that Miss Bolton was quite in the dark as to her real character or object in being friendly. As a matter of fact Mrs. Hall was known only too well at a certain notorious house in Duke Street, St. James's, kept by half a dozen women of ill-fame, and to those acquainted with her, her real character was in no doubt whatever.

Having wormed her way into Miss Bolton's confidence, Mrs. Hall became a constant visitor at the actress's rooms in Long Acre, and was there

found one day by a friend of Miss Bolton's father, who at once proceeded to open the eyes of the family as to the identity of Mrs. P—— (under which name she was known to Miss Bolton)¹ with the then sufficiently notorious Mrs. Hall. Especially was this friend determined to do this as he had recently discovered that Mrs. Hall had then been visited on various occasions by General Turner and Colonel McMahon, two of the Prince's household who were specially known as ministers to his illicit pleasures. But the salvation of Miss Bolton was destined to be compassed by another friend of her family. This was a certain Dr. Blackborough, and it occurred under these circumstances.

In those days there was in Pall Mall the shop of a noted milliner named Brace, whose establishment was the resort of many a fashionable idler. It ran back and practically made one with a small house, then No. 10 St. James's Square, kept by a man named Watson for gambling and other purposes. It appears that a new costume for Miss Bolton was being made by Mrs. Brace (still another link in the chain of ingenious contriving, no doubt), and Dr. Blackborough happening one day to pass through the Square, observed the Prince of Wales entering No. 10. Continuing his walk into Pall Mall, he there saw Miss Bolton

¹ She passed as the wife of a certain Captain P—— among a more respectable set; and thus led a regular double life.

and Mrs. Hall about to go into Mrs. Brace's establishment. Knowing Mrs. Hall's real character, it flashed immediately on his mind that Miss Bolton was about to become the victim of a plot, and stepping up to her he asked her in front of Mrs. Hall if she was acquainted with the character of her supposed friend. The result was that in spite of that lady's indignant protestations, he had no difficulty in persuading Miss Bolton to allow him to conduct her to her own home. Thus the Prince was deprived of at least one victim ; and the lady later became the unsullied bride of Lord Thurlow.

The case of Lady Masserene is on an altogether different footing. This beautiful woman was a native of France and had married Lord Masserene, who in spite of her having been instrumental in getting him released from prison in her own country, behaved with the utmost indifference to her, and continually left her to her own devices. She seems to have really fallen in love with the Prince of Wales, and when, therefore, his myrmidons, on the look-out for prey for their royal master, observed her beauty and charm, which had, indeed, made something of a sensation in London, they did not find the usual difficulties to overcome.

It is said that it was at Mrs. Howe's, in St. James's Place, that what was called "the first negotiation for the transference of Lady Masserene to the temporary affections of his Royal Highness," took place ; and for a time the Prince

enjoyed that beauty which Lord Masserene had so strangely neglected. But it was only for a time. The Prince, indeed, tired so quickly of his new toys, that his panders were continually obliged to seek fresh objects that might be calculated to excite the senses of the sated voluptuary.

One of these they found in the famous dancer Louise Hillisberg, whose beauty of form was only matched by her grace of movement and charm of manner, and she in turn took her place as temporary chief of the *seraglio* of Carlton House, where with others she was accustomed to take part in dances performed by females whose sole aim and study, we are told, "appeared to have been, like the dancing girls of the East, to perfect themselves in voluptuousness of attitude, and in a shameless exposure of their person to the unrestrained gaze of the libidinous voluptuary." After the Prince had grown satiated with the charms and graces of Louise Hillisberg, he endeavoured to hand her over to Lord Barrymore, but finding that the lady was not thus easily to be disposed of, he was obliged to take more strenuous measures to disembarass himself of one of whom he had grown heartily tired. It is recorded that after having formally repudiated her, the Prince happened one evening to be behind the scenes at the Opera House when she was acting, and as she came off the stage he accosted her in a most familiar way, as if no rupture had

taken place between them. Furious at such behaviour, the singer cast a look of scorn upon him, and drawing herself up, exclaimed: "You are the Prince of Wales, sir,—then know that I am Louise Hillisberg," and swept past to her dressing-room.

The appearance of some other fascinating lady was, no doubt, the cause of the coolness which sprang up between the Prince and Louise Hillisberg; but whether that lady is identical with a certain beautiful Mrs. M—— (we are not allowed to know more of her name than this) the wife of a Nottingham gentleman, who appeared in London about this time and turned the hearts of many young men of fashion, including the Prince, is not clear. What is known, however, is that George saw the new goddess and courted her, and that the artifices of McMahon, and Marable, his co-adjutor as procurer for his Royal Highness, were at once set at work to catch her in their unholy toils.

There was a certain inn called The Horse and Groom, at Streatham, kept at that time by a man named Higginbottom, at which these gentlemen were wont to make assignations with such fair ones as had attracted the notice of the Prince; and thither, under the excuse of a hunting expedition, a sport to which Mrs. M—— was much addicted, that lady was enticed. She there found assembled a select party of the Prince's boon

companions, but the hunt was conveniently put off. McMahon took the opportunity of telling Mrs. M—— what an impression she had made on his master, and so wrought on her by his praise of her beauty and its effects on the fascinating royal Lothario, that much had been accomplished towards seduction, when who should appear in a travelling chariot but the Prince himself, ostensibly on one of his journeys to Brighton. Looking from a window, Mrs. M—— saw him alighting, and a few moments later he was ushered by McMahon into the room in which she was. There is no necessity to depict what followed ; suffice it to say that the Prince carried her back with him to Town.

And here the curious part of the story comes in. The next morning, while the pair were breakfasting together, the Prince began to talk about himself (a subject on which he was always ready to discourse), his amours, even his want of popularity on account of his irregularities ; and among other incidents he recounted the story of his being spied upon at Brighton, to which I have already referred, asserting that he knew that the boy who had traced him to the house near there had been suborned to do so by Lady Jersey. Mrs. M—— asked who the girl was, and of what class of life she sprang from. The Prince said he did not know this, except that she had told him she was the daughter of a Yorkshire gentleman, that she had

two sisters, one of whom surpassed her in beauty. "What that sister must have been like I cannot pretend to say," he added; "but I will confess I considered Louisa Howard to be one of the most perfect beauties I have ever seen."

"Louisa Howard!" exclaimed Mrs. M——, turning pale.

"Yes, what of her, did you know her?" replied the Prince.

"Gracious God!" said Mrs. M——, "then I have been sacrificing myself to the seducer of my own sister!"

The list of those who thus became victims—sometimes, it must be confessed, willing victims, sometimes as the result of long intrigues and complicated seductions—to the Prince's passion for women is a long and unedifying one. We hear of a Mrs. B—ing—n, who fell, after her husband had been fooled to the top of his bent by royal condescension and was blinded to the ulterior motives that actuated invitations to Carlton House and public recognition by the Prince in Hyde Park and elsewhere; of a certain Lady R——, who on the occasion of *her* husband being away at Bath was cajoled into an upper room at Taylor's, the shoemaker in Bond Street, only to find the Prince there full of ardour and protestations of eternal affection, protestations she had the strength of mind to repulse; and there are many other instances, in which nothing was sacred, neither

female virtue nor the honour of husband and family, to the importunity of one who had in him no little of the character of a Roman Emperor of the decadence, and who in such respects seems rather a recrudescence of a Tiberius or a Caligula than a gentleman—the first gentleman in Europe, in a word—of the budding nineteenth century.

Can it be wondered at that the Prince, who thus habitually outraged decency and convention, should have become unpopular with a nation which compared (perhaps rather unfairly) his way of life with that of his father ; which contrasted the decorum of Windsor and Buckingham House with the licence and libertinism of Carlton House and The Pavilion ? He had begun as an almost legendary Prince, with all the graces in his train ; in but a relatively short time he had arrived at the stage in which he came to be regarded by a large portion of the country as a type of the thorough-paced rake, given over to excesses of all kinds, a hard drinker, a seducer of women, the head and front of those who were careless how much they offended against morals and who had not even the decency to keep their delinquencies from becoming public scandals.

During the latter part of his life he became so secluded from the gaze of his people that what he did, or allowed to be done, within the walls of his palaces could but be dimly guessed at. But at the time of which I am speaking he had not

quite degenerated into the bulky ' Adonis of Fifty ' who regarded his increasing circumference with an almost feminine horror, and who retired within his gilded shell rather from a tremendous self-consciousness than from any special instinct of decency or propriety. He was now in the heyday of his splendid and vigorous manhood, surrounded by a crowd of flatterers and panderers, toying with his mistresses almost as publicly as Charles II. toyed with his, and with much of the same cynical disregard for popular feeling or prejudice.

Brummell, who was by instinct something of a gentleman, made him to outward appearance a gentleman ; Marable and McMahon undertook the dirtier and more sordid part of his perpetual seductions ; and there were plenty of others who aided him, or followed his lead, in setting a thoroughly bad example to those who were one day to become his people. No man more than George, Prince of Wales, probably ever succeeded in spreading wider demoralization throughout London. The decorum of King George and Queen Charlotte was powerless, restricted as it was, to counteract the bad influence of the Heir Apparent ; and their rather bourgeois habits and manners were little likely to stand a chance against the flashy splendour and the meretricious attributes of their son and his male and female associates.

While the Prince was but the Prince, many no doubt while reprehending his ways reconciled

themselves to them on the supposition that when he should, in fullness of time, ascend the throne, he would, like Henry V., cast from him the evil counsellors of his youth and develop into a decent-living monarch ; and it is due to the falsification of such hopes that, during his latter years, the monarchy fell into such disrepute that it is probable that had not the succession fallen on a young girl, a revolution, if not so drastic as that which caused the death of Charles I., certainly as drastic as that which drove James II. from his throne, might have occurred.

The unpopularity of the Prince, which found an outlet in all sorts of pamphlets, in pasquinades and lampoons and caricatures often as indecent and as disgusting as the disgusting and indecent incidents they recorded and satirized, was due to a cumulation of causes of which his shameless connexion with women was but a part. His constant quarrels with his father and mother, in which, truth to tell, there were grave faults, especially during the Prince's earlier years, on both sides ; his conduct to his wife, which not even her indiscretion and often undignified frivolity can excuse ; the very fact of it being then suspected, as it is now known, that when he married her he had already been through the marriage service with another ; the Bacchanalian orgies which report said were of constant occurrence at Carlton House and The Pavilion ; his enormous debts which, it

was known, largely resulted from gifts to his *seraglio* ; and finally the equally well-known character, or want of character, of those with whom he surrounded himself ; all these had a cumulative effect in alienating from him the affection he had once inspired and the loyalty which he had, apparently, come to disregard as unessential to him.

That he possessed, even to his last days, certain qualities which fascinated those who came into personal relations with him cannot be denied ; we have many evidences of it on the part of those who were in no way affected by the glamour of royalty or were likely to be biased in their judgments even of kings or princes. He could be charming in his manners, gracious often enough without exhibiting overmuch condescension ; he was a kind and considerate master to his servants, as various well-authenticated anecdotes attest ; he was not ungenerous, and, indeed, is known to have raised money not for his own use but for the alleviation of distress ; his habits with those to whom he gave his confidence were alluring in their simplicity and ease, and he could mimic as well as Mathews, could tell a story as well as Sir Walter, and, on occasion, could be as regal as Louis Quatorze himself. He was, besides, an extremely cultivated man. He had a *flair* for art (it is significant that it was the Dutch school of the 17th century that chiefly appealed to him,

in which, indeed, he may be said to have set the fashion in England); he could quote the classics with understanding; and he exhibited an interest in the most unlikely things for one of his calibre.

The fact is his senses were continually getting the better of his intellect—and he let them have full play, and found plenty to help him to do so. If one reads some of the scurrilous (but not necessarily wholly inaccurate) descriptions of him which appeared in print during his lifetime, for instance, the letters signed ‘Neptune’ and ‘Gracchus,’ which were addressed to him, one would visualise him as a Silenus or a satyr (as they actually indicate that he was), and only that. But we know that there is no man wholly bad, and bad as in many ways George, whether as Prince, Regent, or King, was, there were also in his character certain phases which the sternest moralist must be pleased to find, and which should, in fairness, be borne in mind when his many faults and failings are remembered.

It has been said that the Prince had sycophants instead of advisers, and favourites instead of friends. That this was so can be substantiated over and over again. If it was obvious during his earlier years, it became more marked when the Regency was conferred upon him. Then, the adulation he had always received from his immediate *entourage* became still more pronounced, and the murmurs of a large section of the people were

drowned by the chorus of praise which rose like so much incense about him. Accustomed as he had long been to this, its iteration and increasing volume had their baneful effects, and so far from entering on a more discreet way of life, the Regent continued and increased those amorous activities which had become part of the nature of the Prince of Wales.

The Regency began on February 5th, 1811, and was inaugurated by one of those splendid entertainments at Carlton House, at which the royal host shone in a kind of meridian splendour of glory and condescending affability, and at which nothing was wanting to dazzle the eye or intoxicate the senses. Had George been content with such forms of luxury, Posterity would have likened him to François Premier and Louis Quatorze, without their vices—examples of a gorgeous and dazzling sovereignty. But it is a fact that for one of these semi-public exhibitions, there took place within the walls of the palace innumerable entertainments of a more questionable character, the details of which cannot be recorded as they resemble rather the descriptions to be found in the pages of Suetonius and Petronius, than the more sober annals of a period if not less immoral at least more decent than that of the Roman Emperors of the decadence. It would seem as if impatient and irritated as we know him to have been at the restrictions placed upon him as



Sketched at Apsal

GEORGE IV. AS REGENT.

(face p. 116)

viceroys for his father, he determined to recompense himself in other ways and to give a free rein to those indulgences which he had never curbed but which he now excited to further efforts.

Marable and McMahon were still more assiduous, if possible, in pandering to his pleasures, and if he turned from the results of their activities for a moment, it was to discuss the cut of a coat with Brummell, or to abide by the judgment of a female jury solemnly trying the case as to the relative merits of the trouser or the pantaloon. Business, whether of the State or his private concerns, he always hated, and on receiving ministers he would discuss all sorts of subjects rather than that about which they had sought an audience. The grim Wellington has recorded this trait and how he was accustomed to let the Prince have his talk out, and then pertinaciously return to the subject in question ; but he was practically the one man who had the strength of character to do it.

As I have indicated, with increase of power and authority George's extravagant and amorous propensities increased ; he developed a megalomania for display on the one hand and for conquest on the other ; and he was surrounded by those whose business and interest it was to comply with both.

At this time Lady Jersey was the reigning sultana within the palace, Mrs. Fitzherbert a kind of out-pensioner, and other ladies, of whom Mrs.

Hope, Mrs. Cholmondeley, and Mrs. Hamilton are specifically named, were occasional visitors ; while the Prince's procurers were ever on the look-out for fresh recruits to the Carlton House *seraglio*. If we are to believe some who have written on this part of the Prince's character, such recruits were sought and found not only in the recognized haunts of pleasure, or anywhere where exceptional beauty was to be found, but even boarding schools were explored by pretended dancing and music masters for the same vicious objects ;¹ and the scenes adumbrated in certain novels of the day were realised in the course of these repulsive quests.

The Lady Jersey who exerted so baneful an influence over George, Prince of Wales, must not be confounded, as she not infrequently is, with the later Lady Jersey, the domineering leader of society and one of the Lady Patronesses of Almack's.² The Prince's mistress was Frances, only daughter and heiress of Philip Twysden, Bishop of Raphoe, who married the fourth Earl of Jersey, on March the 26th, 1770, and who died on July the 25th, 1821, having outlived her husband by sixteen years. She was *petite*, but perfect in form and attractive in feature. Walpole, writing to Mann in 1783, and noting the style of beauty exemplified by the Duchess of Devonshire and his

¹ Huish.

² She was Lady Sarah Fane, daughter of John, tenth Earl of Westmorland, and married the fifth Earl of Jersey, the Viscount Villiers, on May 23rd, 1804.

niece Lady Maria Waldegrave, says : “ a more perfect model than any of them, but in miniature, Lady Jersey, is going to Paris, and will be angry if they do not admire her as much as she intends they should.” She was a clever and ambitious woman, and we are told that “ her beauty in the autumn of life (she had been known as “ The beautiful Miss Twysden ”) was rather changed in style than diminished in degree : her graces, natural and acquired, of mind and manner, which equalled, if they did not exceed, her personal charms, were perfected in the school of the great world and the Court.”

Lady Jersey was responsible for the separation of the Prince from Mrs. Fitzherbert ; she was one of the primary causes of the quarrel between him and his other wife ; and when Walpole compares her with Madame de Maintenon and Madame des Ursins, he does an injustice to both these foreign ladies.

The Mrs. Hamilton mentioned above was also known as Mrs. Duff, and of her the Duke of Queensberry is said to have once remarked that there was no female who had attracted his attention whom she did not ultimately succeed in obtaining for him. At least in one instance, probably in many unrecorded, she was equally instrumental in pandering to the Prince's desires, and together with McMahon she was the cause of the ruin of the two daughters of a clergyman, whose fate was unhappily that of many innocent girls

whose beauty had caught the eye of the Regent. But there were, as I have shewn, those who were proof against these manifold seductions, and it is told of one, a once famous beauty named Mënziez, that on receiving the Prince's portrait with the words *L'Amour est le charme de la Vie*, written on the back, she returned it with the inscription effaced, and *L'Armour d'un Prince ne vaut pas grande chose*, inscribed in its place.

The amount of money squandered by the Prince on his pleasures was incredible, and resulted in those constant accumulations of debts which were a perpetual source of irritation to the people and of anxiety to successive ministries. It is said that at least half a million was expended by him in presents to courtesans ; and it is a fact that the expedients resorted to by him and his friends to raise more funds for similar extravagant purposes resulted in acts of injustice and even worse which went far to increase his unpopularity. Bonds were given for ready money on his behalf, not only in this country but in France, and when the moment came for payment, various illegal acts were connived at in order to disembarass the royal debtor of further responsibility. It is not here necessary to go into details regarding these unsavoury matters, but at the time the scandals attaching to such things were matters of public knowledge, and the names of de Beaume and Percegaux, Goldsmidt and Jeffreys, *inter multos*

alios, were associated at various times in these repeated attempts to bolster up the royal credit.

The Prince's notorious way of life and his endless extravagance—extravagance on women, on personal adornment (it is credibly stated that sometimes a single morning coat cost him £300, so numerous were the alterations, so constant the going and coming of his tailors from London to Windsor and elsewhere), on the building and rebuilding of Carlton House and the Pavilion and the Cottage at Windsor, besides the huge sums spent on his household where many a hanger-on must have made a small fortune, at last brought his unpopularity to a head, and inflammatory placards were to be seen posted about the town with the words 'No Regent' prominent among all kinds of lurid threats.

The seclusion into which he withdrew himself after he became King may be largely attributed to a recognition of these popular demonstrations of distrust and dislike. When he did occasionally emerge *coram populo*, the King was not always received even with silence, and it was only on such occasions as the visits he paid to Ireland and Scotland and his Hanoverian domains, after his accession, when organised loyalty and the excitement of pageantry lent a factitious air of popular applause to the attendant ceremonials, that George IV. can really be said to have tasted that popularity which had been his before he forfeited it by his shortcomings and his vices.



CHAPTER VII

GEORGE THE FOURTH (*Continued*)

BY this time the reign of Lady Jersey may be said to have ended, and Lady Hertford took her place. The old yellow chariot which Moore speaks of was constantly¹ to be seen passing out of the gates of Carlton House on its way to Manchester Square, where the still lovely but mature 'Marchesa' (she was fifty in 1806, when the Prince fell in love with her) awaited her royal admirer. So frequent were these visits that a placard appeared in the streets headed "Lost—between Carlton House and Manchester Square—the Prince Regent."

The Prince appears to have sighed long in vain for her love. And it is said that one day, when he had partaken of Lord Hertford's hospitality and the party had broken up, he contrived to lure her into an ante-room and then to have made such violent love to her that she screamed and thus brought her husband on to the scene. The

¹ Sir Samuel Romilly, in his Diary, says, "The Prince does not pass a day without visiting Lady Hertford."

latter, in a fury of passion, struck the Prince and kicked him so effectually that he was laid up for some time at Carlton House with a severe sprain ; a circumstance perpetuated by Peter Pinder in a set of verses entitled *A kick from Yarmouth to Wales*, and by a well-known caricature, published by Johnston in January, 1812, called *Princely Agility; or The Sprained Ankle*.

Later, the lady's scruples were effectually overcome, and when indeed the Princess Charlotte died at Claremont, her father was hurriedly recalled from Lord Hertford's seat in Suffolk, whither he had gone to bask in the smiles of the Marchioness.

The mention of the Princess, who was really the only wholly popular member of the royal family at this time, conveniently enables me to say a word or two regarding the relationship between her and her father. There is no doubt that the Prince had a very difficult part to play in respect to his conduct towards his daughter. His notorious habits of life had resulted in his not being looked upon as a fit guardian for a young girl ; his conduct to her mother had further alienated them. The question, too, of her education had been productive of all sorts of disagreements, and it is known that on one occasion, when she was living at Warwick House, the Prince made a clean sweep of those who had been placed about her.¹ Her flight to

¹ George Cruikshank produced a caricature of this, entitled *The R——t kicking up a row : or Warwick House in an uproar !!!*

the Princess Caroline at Blackheath, in a hackney cab, is one of the minor dramatic incidents in the domestic history of the royal family at this time ; while the question of her marriage resulted in her taking up an attitude that shewed that if she feared the Regent's power she was quite capable of resisting his will. Her alliance with Prince Leopold of Saxe-Coburg was altogether a matter of inclination ; and she absolutely refused to marry the Prince of Orange, whose interests that very astute lady the Grand Duchess of Oldenburg had come to England specially to further, and whom the Prince Regent himself favoured. It is said that the Princess Charlotte asked the Prince of Orange what attitude she would be obliged to take up towards her mother, in the event of a marriage, and that he had replied that she would be able to see her occasionally, but that he would never receive her in his house ; whereupon the Princess exclaimed : " Then I will never be Princess of Orange."

The death of ' the People's Hope ' ¹ may be said to have driven another nail into the coffin of the Regent's already almost moribund popularity ; the trial of Queen Caroline and the refusal to allow her to take part in the Coronation gave it its death-blow.

Henceforth what we know of the life of the

¹ For details of the Princess Charlotte see Huish's *Life*, Miss Cornelia Knight's *Autobiography*, &c.

Regent and King is what may be culled from contemporary diaries and the accounts of those few who were privileged to see him in the seclusion he affected daily more and more. The last great pageant in which he took part was the Coronation—such a coronation as had, indeed, never before been seen in this country, in which all the splendid ceremonial, the gorgeous trappings, the tremendous expense, pales before that sad pathetic sight of a disregarded and ill-used woman beating for admission on the door of the Abbey of history, for admittance to a ceremony at which she possessed every right to be present. The King emerged ramparted about by all the glory of a stately pageant, but he had for ever lost a hold on the affections of his people.

As Lady Hertford had supplanted Lady Jersey in the King's affections, so Lady Hertford was destined to be ousted by Lady Conyngham. When the rule of this notorious lady began is not quite clear, but there is no doubt that she exercised an extraordinary influence over George IV. to the day of his death, greater perhaps than that of any of the many women with whom he had been connected. She installed herself and her family at Windsor Castle or the Cottage, and reigned paramount. Creevy tells us how her brother Denison was much upset about her and the King—although he believed there was nothing criminal in it “between persons of their age,” but he heard

allusions on all sides to the scandal, and apparently felt the position acutely. Not so the lady herself apparently, nor indeed her son, Lord Mount Charles, who had been made Under Secretary for Foreign Affairs through Canning's influence, nor even her husband, who duly became Lord High Steward through the same help. Indeed, Lady Conyngham feathered her nest (as the saying is) extraordinarily well, and herself carried off van loads of goods, including at least one of the State jewels, after the King had breathed his last.

It is not difficult to understand how such a woman, whose rapacity must have been apparent even to so charmed and fascinated a mind as that of George IV., was able to retain her hold over him. He had become domesticated ; after all his amorous exploits and sensual excitements the rake had quietened down into an advanced, although not old, age of sobriety and monotony. All he wanted was a quiet time, and this she secured for him. The man who had exhausted every means of pleasure with an activity worthy of a very much better cause, was now content, even desirous, of passing day after day in a routine that sounds in the retrospect as deadly dull as it must actually have been. Now and again a temporary quarrel occurred to disturb the prevalent harmony, quarrels probably instigated by that restlessness and impatience which Lady Conyngham herself, according to Creevy, called

‘terrible.’ Thus she and the King had what the diarist terms “a blow up”; she threatened to go abroad; she put on virtuous airs; but a few days, and probably a few presents, a jewel for herself or a place for a relation or friend, and all was again serene after the thunderstorm.

The philosopher and moralist have much to ponder over as regards the advantages of regal splendour when they turn to contemporary accounts of the daily life at The Cottage at Windsor, to which seclusion our sybarite had withdrawn himself. There he sits, on that famous sofa of the well-known print, telling his endless stories, sometimes indulging in his quite inimitable mimics, complacently garrulous; what time the chief and now only sultana conceals her yawns with her fan or throws herself back in her chair in an access of boredom.

Lady Conyngham was no doubt largely responsible for the now secluded life of one who had erst been particularly fond of exhibiting himself as part of some regal pageant. By causing the privilege of the *entrée* to be curtailed, and in fact restricted to such old friends as the King liked still to have about him, and such ministers of state as had a prescriptive right to it, she was able to eliminate likely rivals and to direct the fountain of honour largely on to herself and her family. And this she did to the scandal of many, but greatly to her own satisfaction and advantage.

“In fact,” writes one authority, “the extraordinary ascendancy which this lady had obtained over the royal mind, was now so apparent in all his actions, that he may literally be said to be a King governed by one subject, and that subject more influential and powerful in her authority than the first minister of state.” Indeed, it is pretty satisfactorily proved that the reason why George IV. gave up his annual sojourns at the Pavilion was on account of some personal affront on the part of certain of the residents at Brighton to Lady Conyngham—the Lady Steward, as she was called—which he regarded as one to himself.

The kind of existence passed at the King’s Cottage at Windsor, that thatched building with its verandah and conservatory, the very anti-thesis of the great Castle on which enormous sums had been expended over Sir Geoffrey Wyatville’s reconstructions and additions, is recorded for us by many contemporary writers, and its monotony is well indicated by a passage in Lady Shelley’s diary :

“The life led at the King’s Cottage,” she writes, “is as follows : The party consists entirely of the Cs” (Lord and Lady Conyngham and their family) “and a few of the London fine ladies who call themselves her intimate friends, among them Countess L” (Lieven) “and Esterhazy. They meet at three o’clock, at which hour five or six phaetons come to the door, each to receive a lady and gentleman,

who drive about the country till five. At that hour the whole party dine in a hut on the shore of Virginia Water. By the way, the caricature of The Kingfisher has somewhat stopped the fishing ! The party sit at table until between nine and ten o'clock, then they return to the cottage, dress *presto*, and go into the saloon where they play at *ecarté* and other games until midnight. It is every day the same. Oh ! monotony ! ”

Lady Shelley adds that the Duke of Wellington on these occasions always breakfasted with Lady Conyngham, the King taking that meal in his own room. She certainly had no partiality for the Lady Steward, whom she calls ‘ Kill-joy,’ but states that George IV. regarded her as “ the most agreeable clever woman that he ever knew.”

Raikes takes up the tale and tells us something of the King’s personal daily life. “ His general habit,” he says, “ was to remain in his *robe de chambre* all the morning, and never to dress till the hour of dinner. In this *déshabille* he received his ministers, inspected the arrangement of all the curiosities which now adorn the gallery in the Castle, amused himself with mimicking Jack Redford, the stud-groom, who came to receive orders, or lectured Davison, the tailor, on the cut of the last new coat.”

The fishing temple referred to by Lady Shelley was one of the King’s own creations. It was in that Chinese style which he affected and which

found a vaster development in the Pavilion which in spite of 'Gentleman' Turveydrop's appreciation is probably as hideous a building as the mind of man ever evolved. The Virginia Water erection, as being smaller and overlooking the beautiful lake, and as being surrounded by weeping willows and other appropriate greenery, was less offensive, indeed may be said to have been as picturesque as Raikes thought it, and no doubt George IV. found a certain variety in passing thence to the splendid and historic pile which he did so much to enlarge and beautify, and again in changing this regal abode for the thatched and picturesque cottage where he played at a regal rusticity.

When the King did make a public appearance, it was either because he had a sudden revival of delight in pageantry, as in the opening of Parliament, or a *blasé* recrudescence in sport, as when he appeared at Ascot. On one of the latter occasions, notably in 1824, he does not seem, at least on Creevy's showing, to have cut a very regal figure. Writes the Diarist: "Our old acquaintance, Prinney, was at the races each day, and tho' in health he appeared perfect, he has all the appearance of a slang leg—a plain brown hat, black cravat, scratch wig, and his hat cocked over one eye. There he sat in one corner of his stand, Lady Conyngham rather behind him, hardly visible but by her feathers. He had the same limited set of *jips* about him each day, and arrived and

departed in private. I must say he cut the lowest figure." One visualises him as the Dubosc-Brummell of royal life !

The one dominant characteristic of George IV.'s latter days was indolence. Greville is, I think, hardly a fair judge of the King's character, because although he was essentially right in many of his verdicts, they are all tinged by that personal animosity with which 'the Groncher' vitiated so much of his innate commonsense and acute perception. But there is no doubt he was correct enough when he remarks that " the King's indolence is so great that it is next to impossible to get him to do even the most ordinary business, and Knighton is still the only man who can prevail on him to sign papers, &c."

It might, perhaps, be thought that the disease—incipient dropsy and ossification of the heart—which carried him off, was in some degree responsible for this indolence which was apparent to many others less vitriolic in their sentiments than Greville, were it not a fact that the King would on occasions exert himself to the utmost in talking and laughing with his friends and in mimicking those whom he had known in earlier days, while messengers on State business and even Ministers were kept waiting an unconscionable time in his outward rooms. " Damn Watson, let him wait," he remarked on one occasion, what time he was doing nothing better than idling and lounging with

Lord Mount Charles or some other of the friends of his latter days.

Those friends were of a very different calibre from such as had once surrounded with their wit, their blandishments, their genius, the splendid young prince who had developed into the obese indolent monarch. In place of Sheridan and Fox, Fitzpatrick and George Selwyn, Hare and Prince Boothby and Brummell, and the officers of his own regiment, the 10th Light Dragoons, Poyntz and Churchill, Bradyll and Jack Lee, and the rest, George was later to be surrounded by men who had become necessary to him from long and manifold services, often of a questionable character—McMahon and General Turner, Lord Moira and Lord Yarmouth, Lord Mount Charles and George Hanger and so on. “George IV.,” says Raikes, “never had any private friends: he selected his confidants from his minions. McMahon was an Irishman of low birth and obsequious manners. . . . Bloomfield was a handsome man, and owed his introduction at Court to his musical talents. . . . George Lee had also a long run of favouritism in those days, but his confidences were limited to the turf, and his influence never extended beyond the stable.” And just as his turf affairs (although after the scandal attaching to Chifney, his jockey, who was accused of not riding straight, which had caused him to give up his membership of the Jockey Club, these were negligible) were in Lee’s

hands, and his amorous intrigues in those of Hunter and Marable and McMahon, so his financial affairs were largely looked after by Lord Moira,¹ although they were so numerous and so complicated that it would be difficult to say how many subsidiary persons had not a hand in the making and attempted arrangement of his debts.

George as Prince and Regent, and even as King, owed money right and left, notwithstanding the enormous sums voted by Parliament at various times for the liquidation of his affairs, and the famous occasion on which, as Prince, he attempted to live on £10,000 a year, setting aside four times that amount towards gradually satisfying his creditors.

Many discreditable stories are told of bonds raised and never met,² of creditors who found their error in relying on the word of a prince, of shopkeepers actually dunning the first gentleman of Europe for the payment of their accounts. One of these (and the anecdote is symptomatic of many such) was Vulliamy, the jeweller in Pall Mall. His bill amounted to a large sum, and he could never obtain even a portion of the money. In despair he went to Brighton, where the Prince then was, but was refused admittance to the

¹ In 1796 Lord Moira is found trying to raise money on his own personal security for the Prince.

² For an account of the Alien Act and how it adversely affected those who had lent money to the Prince and his brothers, see Huish's *Life of George IV.*, vol. i, p. 312.

Pavilion. Nothing daunted, he hung about the precincts of the place which had eaten up so much of other people's money, and waited until his Royal Highness should emerge on one of his driving excursions. The great gates were thrown open, and out came the Prince (perhaps on the very occasion on which, according to that gentleman's own statement, he observed Mr. Turveydrop, and remarked "Who is he? Who the devil is he? Why don't I know him? Why hasn't he forty thousand a year?") Vulliamy rushed forward. The carriage stopped, and the royal voice enquired "Vulliamy, what do you want?" "Oh, Sare, By God if your Royal 'Ighness not pay my bill, I shall be in your father's bench to-morrow." The Prince merely laughed, and drove on; and the bill remained unpaid until Parliament was called upon to discharge it and so many more.

Hitherto I have recorded instances in support of the Prince's claim to the title of rake, gathered from his relations with women. Extended as these were in all sorts of directions, and embracing all kinds of frail ladies, from Harriot Vernon and Mrs. Robinson to Lady Hertford and Lady Conyng-ham, there is no doubt such was the atmosphere created by his numerous amorous exploits, that his conquests, large as they were, were distorted by the public mind into far larger numbers than was actually the case. The fact is that many women who were favourites of members of the

Prince's *entourage*, and even some who had but the slightest connection with it, posed as favourites of his Royal Highness himself, for the purpose of running up bills and otherwise obtaining credit, which they would have had great difficulty in doing, perhaps have found it impossible, unless they could state that they were living under the Prince's protection.

But there are other ways of exhibiting rakish propensities than illicit relations with the fair sex ; drinking, for instance, and gambling in all its varied manifestations, and in a variety of ways well known to the young bloods of all periods, although in few other periods so openly exhibited as during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Drinking was then almost part and parcel of life in most of its phases ; and at a time when Pitt and Dundas and Sheridan consumed port and claret in vast quantities, and even learned judges went down to administer justice in Westminster Hall, primed with almost as much wine as they were with legal knowledge, it can hardly be wondered at that purely idle and decorative persons should have indulged in similar tastes and even more unlimited Bacchanalian orgies.

The Prince was a consistent, if not, as the times went, an actually hard drinker. I imagine that a very little was sufficient to create in him that maudlin state in which he was not infrequently found. He enjoyed drinking in his palace, but

even more, while seeing life, in some of those haunts whose character may be gauged from the pages of many contemporary chronicles, places described by 'Blackmantle' and resorted to by Tom and Jerry and Bob Logic.

There was a certain public house in the Grays Inn Road noted for its Burton ale, and the Prince being anxious to taste it, went there one day with Lord Southampton. After a time he was recognised and immediately left. A few days later an inscription on the house apprised the world that mine host was "Purveyor of Burton Ale to His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales." The incident is significant of other things. The public immediately took an ell if the Prince gave it an inch, and there is little doubt that many tales of what he did and where he went had their genesis in such single happenings, where curiosity rather than habitual preference was the cause of gossip and scandal.

But that the Prince loved the bottle is undeniable; and much of the sentimentality, of which he possessed an extraordinary fund, arose from his indulgence in this way. He was always calling for brandy on the slightest provocation, and when his tears flowed fastest (and they were always very much on the surface) his potations had been deepest. There lies before me the *recipe* for that famous milk-punch of which he was so fond and which he was accustomed to drink before his

meals and with his meals and after—and a very wonderful and complicated recipe it is ! The orgies at Carlton House are quoted in contemporary records, and that the royal master of the place drank deep on occasion with Sheridan and Yarmouth and George Hanger and the rest, is a fact well known to students of his period.

As a gambler the Prince is not less identified with the manners and customs of his age ; and that he lost immense sums in this way is well established. It was a period of intensive gambling, and in this respect the influence of Charles James Fox, one of his earlier associates, must have been detrimental, for a more inveterate gamester than that great and extraordinary man perhaps never lived. It is a fact, however, that much of the money lost by the Prince in this way was not always due to bad luck ; and it is to be feared that he was but too often the victim of illustrious sharpers who won his money by means which would not have borne investigation. “ Scheme after scheme,” we are told, “ was devised by which a heavy drain was to be made on his finances ; and he became eventually the dupe of a set of titled sharpers who fattened on his credulity, and who, by acts of the most deliberate villainy, reduced him to a state of comparative pauperism.”

The Prince no doubt, too, lost large sums at the faro tables kept by his fashionable female friends, and although, as we have seen, he had other

reasons for frequenting the house of the notorious Lady Archer, there is little doubt that he was not allowed to depart before he had contributed to that egregious person's finances by the easy and polite method of gambling at her faro table.

Nor was he luckier on the Turf, of which at one time he was a distinguished patron. That famous affair of Chifney's riding of 'Escape,' put an end to an association which had never been a particularly profitable one for the Prince; and if he went to the Races in later years it was as a spectator, and when he became King, in an official capacity, not as an owner, nor as one who still preserved a personal inclination for the sport. He had, as usual with him when interested in any new project, spent enormous sums on his racing stables; but the sums he lost in unsuccessful betting were also very large; and although his stable was credited with a fair number of winning events, the vicissitudes of his racing fortune were in the long run much against him.

Among other amusements at that period pugilism occupied a prominent place in the minds of the people, and the Prince's concern with this form of sport was probably rather that of one who wished to identify himself with the pastimes of the people than from any deep-seated love for it *per se*. "That his Royal Highness," says one writer, "should have been an encourager of

pugilistic sports, may, perhaps, have been expected of him as a British prince of his manly form and resolute constitution of mind ; but that he should have personally attended the combats, and, in many instances, been the fomentor of them, must have naturally depreciated him in the estimation of the virtuous and the good."

This may have been so, no doubt ; for puritanism in the few is never so marked as when it exhibits itself in contradistinction to the full-blooded ebullience of the many ; but it is a fact that the Prince gave up attending such exhibitions after he had been present at a prize-fight at which one of the combatants was killed in distressing circumstances. Cruelty was never one of George's vices ; he was far too sentimental for that, and he probably regarded such matters as Pepys did on a famous occasion,—interesting up to a point but not beyond it.

At all periods of his life George IV. had been surrounded by varied sets of men who combined the most brilliant gifts with loose and profligate ideas. As I have attempted to show, he was himself brilliant in many ways, a scholar, something of a wit, and, in his younger days, fascinating to an extraordinary degree. But all these advantages had been stultified by the lack of balance. From his earliest years he had been spoiled and at the same time thwarted. Many and many a time his native good sense was repressed by the jealousy

which his popularity aroused. The result was that he determined to live a wholly selfish life, given over to those sensual pleasures which his position and the graces of his person placed so easily at his command. From such a position to that of the sybarite he ultimately became was but a step, and he gradually degenerated into the figure which has become historic, the figure, that is, of a man who would put himself out for nothing or anybody ; who shewed a peevish and almost childish dislike to do anything he was asked to do ; who would, as we have seen, keep ministers of state waiting interminably while he was lounging with his favourites or discussing fashions with his tailor ; who, during the last sad days when he lay in his splendid castle, facing the death he knew to be inevitable, would ring up his over-worked pages at all hours of the night for the glass of water he had but to stretch forth his hand to take for himself.

There are many traits in the character of George IV. which, when examined by themselves, are engaging, almost lovable. If we can forget the heartless way in which he loved for a short time and then disregarded those who had pleased him ; his conduct to his wife (and it takes more than he can shew on the other side for many to do that) ; his discarding of Brummell, his petty meannesses and jealousies, we might create, perhaps, quite a taking personality out of the figure which bulks with a

certain regality in the line of British princes. He could exhibit phases of a generosity which are difficult to reconcile with his innate and general exhibitions of selfishness ; his attitude towards many of his lesser dependants was that of a considerate, at times almost an affectionate, master ; he could show a tender regard for some, as in the case when it was attempted to take away Miss Seymour, Mrs. Fitzherbert's ward, from that lady's care ; he could be condescending and friendly to those whom his humour chose to reckon among his friends ; and the man who, as King, would call the great Scott ' Walter ' and the great Wellington ' Arthur,' might be at least sure of a tender place in the mind of the glorious wizard and even in that of the grim hero of a hundred fights.

When Scott sat on the glass from which the royal lips had drunk, a glass he had intended to be an heir-loom in his family, there was something beyond mere vulgar king-worship in the act of one who could create kings at will from his own inexhaustible genius ; when Wellington spoke of the preponderance of good in his royal master's character, there will be few to set down the verdict as the result of a vulgar bedazzlement from the rays of royal favour.

There is, indeed, a curious diversity in the judgments passed on George IV. The point of view of his critics had much to do with this ; the

complexity of his character perhaps more ; but no one has denied that he was a rake, just as no one has denied the fascination of his manners and a kind of urbanity of disposition which went far, especially in the eyes of such contemporaries as were brought into personal contact with him, to soften those less attractive traits whose colours posterity has deepened and which during his lifetime were a scandal and a stumbling-block to a large section of the people.

I have adumbrated certain of his qualities which deserve to be rather more fully noted ; and in the following chapter I shall endeavour to give instances of his powers of mimicry, his regard for his dependants, his generosity ; and such traits as caused many to speak well of one of whom the world at large, in consequence of his failings and frailties, had too much reason habitually to speak ill.



CHAPTER VIII

GEORGE THE FOURTH (*Concluded*)



GEORGE IV.'s behaviour to Brummell and to Sheridan, both of whom had mentally and sartorially done so much for him, has been adduced as a proof of his want of heart. But Brummell did, undoubtedly, overstep the bounds of propriety in his behaviour to the Heir Apparent, and came at last to make a butt of the Prince who had put up with much but could not tolerate reflections on his increasing bulk.

The story is well known of that curious friendship and that severance which had in it, for the beau, the elements of tragedy. There is pathos in that snuff-box said to have been sent as an olive branch, an olive branch put aside and disregarded ; and the story of the poor half-witted erstwhile leader of fashion, the friend and mentor of the Prince, the patroniser of half the peerage, at Calais and Caen, holding imaginary receptions and oiling ever and anon his dilapidated beaver, is one of the saddest conceivable—for it tells of frustrated ambition, and of a fate too strong for

one whose splendid fortunes seemed once capable of defying fate.

With regard to Sheridan the Prince's attitude has been equally censured ; but there is reason to believe that he actually sent the broken-down wit a sum of money when he heard of his destitute condition, but that such information did not reach him until Sheridan was dying.

On the other hand quite well-authenticated instances are on record of George having displayed traits of generosity, which it is but fair to remember when so many of his shortcomings are recollected. One of these is thus recorded by a writer¹ who was far from friendly to him. The Prince was one day so exceedingly urgent to have £500 at an hour on such a day, and in so unusual a manner, that the gentleman who furnished the supply had some curiosity to know for what purpose it was obtained. On enquiry he was informed that the moment the money arrived the Prince drew on a pair of boots, pulled off his coat and waistcoat, slipped on a plain morning frock, without a star, and turning his hair to the crown of his head, put on a slouched hat, and thus walked out. This intelligence raised still greater curiosity, and with some trouble the gentleman discovered the object of the mysterious visit. An officer of the army had just arrived from America with his wife and six children, in such low circum-

¹ Huish.

stances that to satisfy some clamorous creditor he was on the point of selling his commission, to the utter ruin of his family. The Prince by accident overheard an account of the case. To prevent the worthy soldier suffering he procured the money and, that no mistake might happen, carried it himself. On asking at an obscure lodging-house in a court near Covent Garden for one of the inmates he was shown up to his room, and there found the family in the utmost distress. Shocked at the sight, he not only presented the money but told the officer to apply to Colonel Lake, and give some account of himself in the future; saying which he departed, without the family knowing to whom they were obliged.

There are, besides, instances on record of the Prince bestowing pensions on some of those who had become destitute largely owing to the expense to which they had been put through living in his extravagant and reckless orbit, and a certain Felix McCarthy, a man of infinite wit but hardly of a corresponding integrity, was one of those who were thus remembered by the Prince who has been so often accused, and not without reason, of verifying in his own person the words of the Psalmist. Many, indeed, put their trust in him, but not all did so in vain.

Another anecdote shows a consideration on his part which may well be set against some of those

regardless acts which sullied his reputation and alienated the regard of many.

A certain man published a libel on the Prince and the Duke of York, but although not prosecuted by either, was tried and sentenced to stand in the pillory in Whitehall. On the morning when the sentence was being carried out, the Prince, ignorant of what was going on, rode past the pillory, and seeing a crowd assembled, stopped to enquire the cause of it. When he learned the facts, he realised that his presence might not unnaturally be construed into a tactless or even revengeful act, and accordingly the next day he sent a messenger to the culprit apologising for his presence on such an occasion.

It was by such acts as this that the Prince mitigated in some respects many of those vicious and thoughtless deeds which at a later day, when he became more careless of public opinion, made him so unpopular. For that he was unpopular is proved by the innumerable libels and admonitory pamphlets which were constantly issuing from the press, as well as by the pictorial satires which Rowlandson and Gillray and Cruikshank, and other less known artists, produced at various times on such occasions as when his actions or reported actions seemed specially to call for criticism. These caricatures are as the sands of the sea, and in them we have the Prince under all sorts of guises exhibited with a curious lack of restraint and too

often with positive indecency of draughtmanship and artistic innuendo.

Some of the more restrained of them give us the portraits of those who formed his more intimate *entourage*, as in *Robeing the Regent, or the Road to Preferment*, in which Colonel McMahon, Adam, Sir John Douglas (notorious in connection with one of the incidents in Queen Caroline's tribulations), George Hanger, General Bloomfield, and others are seen surrounding the Prince. *Gudgeon Fishing à la Conservatory*, presents him at a table at which female favourites are assiduously occupied with rods and lines angling for gold fish ; *The Comet of 1811* indicates the Prince as a shooting star with a tail composed of Lord Moira, the Duke of Norfolk, Sheridan, and others ; while *Princely Agility, or the Sprained Ankle*, introduces us into the royal bedchamber and a bloated and flabby patient attended by very full-blown houris and bottle-nosed valets.

One quite famous lampoon of this character, and one to which I have already referred, was entitled *A kick from Yarmouth to Wales*, which appeared in the December of 1811, and shows Lord Yarmouth holding the Regent by his coat collar, at the same time vigorously kicking him behind. Lady Yarmouth (better known as Lady Hertford) is depicted complacently sitting on a sofa, watching her struggling and yelling lover. Attached to this caricature are some verses entitled

The Love Sick Frog, the first verse of which runs thus :

“ A Prince he would a raking go.
Heigh ho ! said Rowley.
Whether his people would have him or no ;
With a rowly-powly, gammon and spinach,
Heigh ho ! said Anthony Rowley.” ¹

Indeed when George did anything out of the common the lampooners and caricaturists were hot on his track, and it is probable that few royal personages have attracted more attention from such artists and poetasters, or have, indeed, done so much to deserve such attention.

Many of these effusions of pencil and pen have a political significance, and are therefore outside our present purview, but such domestic incidents as the Prince's dismissal of his daughter's attendants at Warwick House in 1814 ; the applications for the public payment of his ever-recurring debts ; even his discarding of his whiskers in 1816 ; and the freak he indulged in in 1819, of supping in his kitchen, received perpetuation in this way. Apropos of the last incident, a paragraph appeared in the daily press, in the following terms :

“ Brighton. March 13th. Royal Freak.—We are assured that a few nights ago, the Regent, in a merry mood, determined to sup in the kitchen of the Pavilion. A scarlet cloth was thrown over the pavement, a splendid repast was provided, and the good-humoured Prince sat down, with a select

¹ See *Social England under the Regency*, by John Ashton.

party of his friends, and spent a joyous hour. The whole of the servants, particularly the female part, were, of course, delighted with this mark of Royal condescension."

The incident gave rise to a number of satirical prints, one of which, exhibiting the Regent overturning glasses and dishes, in a state of intoxication, is called *High Life below stairs!! a new Farce as lately performed at the Theatre Royal, Brighton, for the edification and amusement of the Cooks, Scullions, Dish-Washers, Lick-Trenchers, Shoe-Blacks, Cinder-Sifters, Candle-snuffers, &c. &c., of that Theatre, but which was unfortunately Damn'd the first night, by Common Sense.*

As a matter of fact nothing came amiss to the producers of such lampoons, and when after Queen Charlotte's death much of her property was publicly disposed of, there appeared a print entitled *Sales by Auction! or Provident Children disposing of their Deceased Mother's Effects for the Benefit of their Creditors*, in which a very protuberant prince is seen acting as auctioneer, while some of the royal family are looking on, with the Duke of York as auctioneer's clerk.

In this connection it will be remembered that after his father's death George IV. contemplated selling the remarkable library he had accumulated, and it was only owing to wiser counsels that he made a merit of presenting it as a gift to the nation—a magnificent but relatively small return

for the immense sums he had received from the people for the payment of his many creditors.

Two examples of that interest in his servants which I have already noted as among the more amiable qualities of George IV. may here conveniently be given. Among the *personnel* of the Brighton stables was a groom named Tom Cross. One day the Prince going to look at his horses remarked the absence of the young fellow, and enquired where he was. After some evasion the head-groom said he had gone away in consequence of some trouble. "Send Mr. — (one of the heads of the department) to me," said the Prince. "Where is Tom Cross?" "I do not know, your Royal Highness." "What has he been doing?" "Purloining the oats, your Royal Highness, so I discharged him." "What, Sir, send him away without acquainting me! not know whither he has gone! a fatherless boy! driven into the world from my service, with a blighted character! Why, the poor fellow will be destroyed . . . seek him out, and don't let me see you till he is found." The lad was discovered and brought to the royal presence, whereupon he wept and acknowledged his fault, and the Prince, after remonstrating with him and giving good advice and counsel, took him back into his service.

On another occasion an artist while copying a picture at Windsor overheard a conversation between an elderly housemaid employed at the castle

and a glazier who was mending a window there. "Have you heard how the Prince is to-day?" said the man. "Much better," was the reply. "I suppose," continued the glazier, "you are glad of that, although to be sure it can't concern you much." "It *does* concern me," replied the woman; "for though I am only a humble servant, I have never been ill but his Royal Highness has concerned himself about me, and has always been pleased, on my resuming work, to say: 'I am glad to see you about again; I hope you have been taken good care of; do not exert yourself too much, in case you become ill again.' If I did not rejoice at his Royal Highness's recovery, aye, and every one who eats his bread, we should be ungrateful indeed."

Is it to be wondered at that even when the people at large were becoming restive over the royal debts and the royal delinquencies, those immediately about him, to whom he showed such consideration, should regard him with something not far removed from affection?

There were, too, many in a higher stratum of society who found him irresistible. We all know how the great and good Walter Scott regarded him; how Theodore Hook was as fascinated by his condescension as he himself was delighted and amazed by the astounding powers of the English *improvisatoire*; even the great Duke, alive as he was to his failings, his puerilities, his selfishness

and his inordinate concupiscence, could say of him that "He was, indeed, the most extraordinary compound of talent, wit, buffoonery, obstinacy, and good feeling—in short a medley of the most opposite qualities, with a great preponderance of good—that I ever saw in any character in my life."¹

It was on the occasion when he uttered this judgment that Wellington remarked on the Prince's extraordinary powers of mimicry, "so much so," says he, "that he could give you an exact idea of anyone, however unlike they were to himself," and he gives one example of how at a dinner at Laeken with the King and Queen of Holland George kept his royal hosts in a continual paroxysm of laughter, by taking off, to his face, the mannerisms of the old Stadtholder of the Netherlands.

A better known example of his powers occurred once at Carlton House. The anecdote is thus recorded in *The English Spy*, whence no doubt Huish and other biographers have taken it.

"Previous to Mathews leaving this country for America, he exhibited a selection from his popular entertainments, by command of his Majesty, at Carlton Palace. A party of not more than six or eight persons were present, including the Princess Augusta and the Marchioness of Conyngham. During the entertainment (with which the King appeared much delighted), Mathews introduced his imitations of various performers on the British

¹ See Raikes's *Journal*.

stage, and was proceeding with John Kemble in *The Stranger*, when he was interrupted by the King, who, in the most affable manner, observed that his general imitations were excellent, and such as no one who had ever seen the characters could fail to recognise ; but he thought the comedian's portrait of John Kemble somewhat too boisterous.—‘ He is an old friend, and I might add, tutor of mine,’ observed his Majesty : ‘ when I was Prince of Wales he often favoured me with his company. I will give you an imitation of John Kemble,’ said the good-humoured monarch. Mathews was electrified. The lords of the bed-chamber eyed each other with surprise. The King rose and prefaced his imitation by observing, ‘ I once requested John Kemble to take a pinch of snuff with me, and for this purpose placed my box on the table before him, saying, ‘ Kemble *obleege* me by taking a pinch of snuff.’ He took a pinch, and then addressed me thus :—(Here his Majesty assumed the peculiar carriage of Mr. Kemble). ‘ I thank your Royal Highness for your snuff, but, in future, do extend your royal jaws a little wider, and say *oblige*.’ The anecdote was given with the most powerful similitude to the actor's voice and manners, and had an astonishing effect on the party present.”¹

¹ Accompanying the letterpress in *The English Spy* is a coloured illustration depicting the scene, and among those present, in addition to the King and the Princess, Mathews and Lady Conyng-ham, may be observed the Duke of Wellington, Sir William Knigh-ton, George Hanger, and others.

It is probable that this remarkable power of mimicry was in some way allied to another more curious characteristic in the Prince's complex mentality—that of imagining himself to have said and done things which all the world, himself, on reflection, included, knew perfectly well he could never have done or said. Everyone knows how he came almost to persuade himself that he had been present at Waterloo, even on one occasion referring to the Duke of Wellington for corroboration of the fact; only to receive the non-committal reply: "I have often heard you say so, Sir." Some one remarking on this to Sheridan he replied: "Yes, but what he particularly piques himself upon is the last productive harvest!"

But the following example of this idiosyncrasy is not so well known, except to readers of Greville's diary, where it is to be found among that mass of anecdotes bearing on George IV. which were set down with such unblushing bias and with the malice so characteristic of the writer.

One day the King was talking about his father, and actually asserted that George III. had once said to him, "Of all the men I have ever known, you are the one on whom I have the greatest dependence, and you are the most perfect gentleman!" On another occasion he said he recollected old Lord Chesterfield saying to him, "Sir, you are the fourth Prince of Wales I have known, and I must give your Royal Highness one piece of

advice: stick to your father; as long as you adhere to your father you will be a great and happy man, but if you separate yourself from him you will be nothing, and an unhappy one"—“and by God” (added the King) “I never forgot that advice, and acted upon it all my life.” Well might the hearers, as the Duke of Wellington says, look at each other with astonishment!

Another marked characteristic was his fear of ridicule. Afraid of nothing that was uncertain or even perilous, his dread of being laughed at was so acute that, in view of his increasing size, it had no little to do with his withdrawal from the public gaze during the latter years of his life; and his behaviour to Brummell was no doubt largely caused by anger at the shafts of ridicule which the beau was in the habit of shooting at him on so many occasions.

To estimate the varied qualities of the Prince, if, *pace* Thackeray, you will allow that he had any, you must read what all kinds of people have to say about him, and it would be as obviously unfair solely to base a judgment on the words of the author of *The Four Georges*, or the snarls of Greville and the lampoonists, as it would be to imagine George the paragon of perfection some of his adulators have tried to make him out to be. Fanny Burney found him good-humoured in discourse, vivacious, and obviously anxious to make a good impression on her and Mrs. Delany. She

can tell of his coming into the Queen's room dressed up in an "immense wrapping great-coat," so that they thought he was a burglar or a madman, and carrying the jest off with a charming familiarity and lightness; and she feels sure "his heart is good," though his conduct, she confesses, "renders it so suspicious."

But it is her father, Dr. Burney, who may be supposed less under the domination of royal influence, although, to be sure, not by any means untouched by it, who gives us a later picture of the Prince. Writing to Fanny, on July 12th, 1805, he says :

"Your brother, Dr. Charles, and I have had the honour last Tuesday of dining with the Prince of Wales at Lord Melbourne's, at a particular desire of H.R.H. He is so good humoured and gracious to those against whom he has no party prejudice, that it is impossible not to be flattered by his politeness and condescension. I was astonished to find him, amidst such constant dissipation, possessed of so much learning, wit, knowledge of books in general, discrimination of character, as well as original humour. He quoted Homer in Greek to my son as readily as if the beauties of Dryden and Pope had been under consideration. And as to music, he is an excellent critic; has an enlarged taste—admiring whatever is good in its kind, of whatever age or country the composers or performers may be; without, how-

ever, being insensible to the superior genius and learning necessary to some kinds of music more than others. . . . H.R.H. took me aside and talked exclusively about music, near half an hour, and as long with your brother concerning Greek literature. He is a most excellent mimic of well-known characters: had we been in the dark anyone would have sworn that Dr. Parr and Kemble were in the room. Besides being possessed of a great fund of original humour, and *good humour*, he may with truth be said to have as much wit as Charles II., with more learning—for his merry Majesty could spell no better than the *bourgeois gentilhomme*."

This extract gives, I think, a very fair picture of George's complex character; not vitiated by personal dislike as are the judgments of Greville, nor tinged with that sickly sentimentalism of outlook as are those of the author of that *Life of His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales*, which appeared in 1808, and which finds an excuse for everything its author cannot actually deny. It has something of the fairness with which a later, and admittedly friendly, critic has hit off the character of the Prince. Alluding to the famous figures with whom George at one time consorted, Sheridan and Theodore Hook, Scott and Byron and Fox, Mr. Max Beerbohm speaks thus of one whose personal characteristics he has studied as closely as he has the times of his

princely career, his Regency, and his decade of kingship :

“ Of such men George was a splendid patron. He did not merely sit in his chair gaping princely at their wit and their wisdom, but quoted with the scholars and argued with the statesmen and jested with the wits. Doctor Burney, an impartial observer, says that he was amazed by the knowledge of music that the Regent displayed in a half-hour's discussion over the wine. Croker says that ‘ The Prince and Scott were the two most brilliant story-tellers, in their several ways, he had ever happened to meet.’ Indeed H.R.H. appears to have been a fine conversationalist, with a wide range of knowledge and great humour. We can scarcely realise that if George's birth had been never so humble, he would have been known to us as a most admirable scholar and wit, or as a connoisseur of the arts. . . . In his later years he exerted himself strenuously in raising the tone of the drama. His love of the classics never left him. . . . He was a judge of tone. At his coming the bluff, disgusting ways of the Tom and Jerry period gave way to those florid graces that are still called Georgian.”

Greville's verdict is so well known that it is useless attempting to suppress it, but when he says of the master he served that “ a more contemptible, cowardly, selfish, unfeeling dog does not exist than this King on whom such flattery is

constantly lavished," and will not allow even his "capricious good nature" to arise from any "good principle or good feeling," there can, I believe, be few who will not read into these words a personal animosity on the part of the critic hardly less commendable than the failings of the man he criticises and in whose service he held a subordinate position.

Greville's judgment is thus to some extent stultified; but in Thackeray's famous denunciation the apologists of George IV. are confronted with a more formidable obstacle. For the great writer brings forward such an array of unanswerable charges, so cleverly slurs over certain good qualities, in fact blackens the blots so successfully, that after he has done goring his victim there seems, in truth, but a mangled, indistinguishable mass of shortcomings where there had at least (on Thackeray's own showing) been a coat, a star, "a wig with a countenance simpering under it."

To make the shadows deeper, the great writer adduces instances of men who have shewn remarkable courage, beautiful unselfishness, noble activity, and he even contrasts George's predecessors on the throne as well as his brothers favourably with the man he sets out at once to vituperate and ridicule. There is much truth in what he says; no one can deny it. What I have instanced in these pages is quite enough to show that the Prince was a heartless philanderer, a sensualist of the most

pronounced type, a thoroughly selfish and self-indulgent man. But, on an impartial investigation into the character of George IV., I come to the conclusion that he was not so entirely despicable as Thackeray would have us believe. His faults outweighed his virtues, no doubt ; but that is not saying that he had no virtues. I have adduced instances which go to show that he had ; many of his contemporaries who were not likely to be blinded by the glamour that hedges a king about thought so ; many humble dependants would have been ready to give their vote in his favour and to say a word on his behalf.

What I think he was, was a victim. A victim of a terrible combination : that of sensuality and sentimentalism. Heredity may have been, as I believe it was, for much in the matter, and a systematic pandering and spoiling had so exacerbated these defects that George, in spite of certain good qualities, had not the strength of mind to combat them : and so he comes down to us as what he undoubtedly was, the essential man-about-town of princes with all the defective qualities, all the better nature crushed out, all the good gifts squandered and made of no account.

As I began by saying, his education was bad, the treatment he received from his parents was bad, his companions were bad. What chance, then, had one, so flexible in the hands of flattery, to stand against the seductions that surrounded

him and the spirit of the full-blooded, essentially coarse and profuse age in which he was born. Not viciousness but weakness was George's undoing ; not what he himself was but what his surroundings made him was his initial as it was his ultimate misfortune. Besides this he was a histrion all his life, deceiving himself in his constantly changing parts, as he deceived others : his constant tears ; his frequent heroics ; his stabbings when Mrs. Fitzherbert proved obdurate ; his varied ways of making himself interesting in the eyes of an intended victim, are evidences of a theatricality which later caused him to pad and bedizen himself, and which had its splendid climax in his splendid coronation.

Like a consummate actor, too, he could change his *rôle* with amazing rapidity and success—a *rôle* ranging from the gorgeous young Prince Florizel of Cosway's miniatures, to the full blown, meretricious monarch, complacently smirking from his historic sofa.



CHAPTER IX

THE ROYAL DUKES AND OTHERS

IHAVE indicated in the last chapter that George, Prince of Wales, was not the only member of his family whose way of living gave rise to criticism and whose exploits, amorous and otherwise, were fraught with scandal. But as he was certainly the most decorative, and from his position the most important, of the royal brothers, his delinquencies were more noticeable and widely advertised. Adverse critics of George have deepened the colour of their accusations against him by comparing him unfavourably with the Dukes of York and Clarence. But if we delve deep enough in the scandalous chronicles of the time we shall find stories regarding both, which had they been told of George would no doubt have been thought far more shocking. "The sailor King who came after George was a man; the Duke of York was a man, big, burly, loud, jolly, cursing, courageous," writes Thackeray with a cumulation of epithets which might be as properly applied to George. For if that question of want of courage has received

some support from a remark made on one occasion by George III. (always inimical to his eldest son) we have the Duke of Wellington's opinion that the Prince feared nothing but ridicule ; and we know that he made various attempts to be allowed to join the army when the threat of Napoleon's invasion stirred up an unwonted military spirit in the nation.

The Duke of York was, no doubt, what the author of *The Four Georges* has described him ; but his life was much the same as was that of his elder brother ; the scandal attaching to him in connection with Mrs. Clarke is still remembered ; his share in all sorts of frolics is still to be found described in a certain class of social literary record.

The fact is most of the royal brothers were built much on the same lines, and if George IV.'s name is associated with Mrs. Robinson and Mrs. Fitzherbert, that of the Duke of York is connected with Mrs. Clarke, that of the Duke of Clarence with Mrs. Jordan ; while that of Ernest, Duke of Cumberland will hardly shake itself free from a scandal of a deeper complexion. All of these men were boisterous and full-blooded, free and easy in their manners, unrestrained in their conversation. George did at least cover his many delinquencies with a veneer of grace which was a stranger to the manners of Frederick and William.

There is no doubt that the temperament of these young men re-acted on one another ; and when

we read of some of the escapades of George, Prince of Wales, we may be sure that Frederick, Duke of York, was often enough his companion. We know he was on that occasion when the Prince was made to give up his purse to the highwayman on Hay Hill; we know the difficulties to which his love of gambling exposed him; we know he was prodigal in his pleasures and not, in this respect at least, very different from George; but there was something about him, a generosity, an affability, a gentleness even, which condoned, in the eyes of the public, many of his vices and made him, in spite of them, loved.

It was much the same with the Duke of Clarence; and that bluff sea-dog, with all his shortcomings, his *bourgeois* tendencies (on which Greville is so severe), and his curious eccentricities will always have a warm place in the heart of the people which George might once have had but which he forfeited because of the one prevailing characteristic which differentiated him from his brothers—his innate selfishness.

Among the unfortunate influences on the character of the Prince of Wales when he was yet but a young man, was that of his uncle Henry Frederick, Duke of Cumberland. This weak, dissipated, although not ill-natured man introduced him into all sorts of society of a more than questionable character, not so much from systematic bad intentions, but from a thoughtlessness which took no

heed of the consequences ; and it is largely due to him that George developed those precocious delights in pleasure which, once tasted, he could never after do without.

At a frolic of another character in which the young man took part the Duke was one of his companions. It appears that Lord Chesterfield had invited the nephew and uncle to a party at his house at Blackheath. The bottle, as was usual, circulated freely, and at last the whole party were royally drunk. Before the convives retired, one of them let loose a mastiff which was generally kept chained up on account of its ferocity. The dog, on being let loose, first made for a footman, and catching him by the arm, lacerated him in a dreadful manner ; it then sprang at a horse, which it nearly strangled. The whole place was now in a state of confusion and uproar. The guests made a circle round the dog and attempted to belabour it into quiescence ; but it successfully kept them at bay ; what time Lord Chesterfield slipped down a flight of stone steps and nearly fractured his skull. What happened afterwards is not recorded, but we are told that “ the contest then terminated, the young prince jumped into his phaeton, and falling fast asleep, left the reins to his uncle, who, as good luck would have it, brought him safe to town.” ¹

¹ Lloyd's *Life of George IV.* For details of George and his brothers see, too, Marsh's *Clubs of London.*

Another, but later, nefarious influence on the Prince was the Duc de Chartres, better known as 'Philippe Egalité', who visited England in 1783, and during the two months he remained here was one of his most constant companions. The character of the Duke is one familiar to most people. He was a *roué* of the most pronounced type, and no worse companion for a young man with the budding tastes of a libertine could possibly be imagined. He became an intimate at Carlton House, where all kinds of orgies took place under his influence or for his delectation. So anglophile was he that he affected the English dress and style of living to an excess that impinged on the ridiculous. He no doubt had an admiration for English manners, especially such as were connected with the turf, and he carried back with him to Paris the taste for such things which, through his influence, for long dominated the French capital. But it is probable that not a little of his imitation was in the way of flattery; and it is a fact that he endeavoured to lay the Prince under an obligation to him, by pressing on him a loan of money at a moment when his embarrassments were acute. It was characteristic that the Duke's nominees in this attempted transaction were two women of the loosest morals, who formed part of his suite; and that both he and they boasted openly of their help to the Prince in this direction. It appears that the Duke of



CARLTON HOUSE.

Portland and Pitt were instrumental in putting a stop to what threatened to be a scandalous transaction of international importance, and one of such a character as had hardly occurred since Charles II. became a pensioner of Louis XIV.

Other bad influences were of distinctly home production : Fox, great man as he was, was an inveterate gambler ; Sheridan was a hard drinker even amid a society which prided itself on hard drinking ; and the Prince surrounded himself by a number of other men who pandered to his pleasures and found in him a ready and an apt pupil in all sorts of vicious courses.

In the following chapters I shall have something more particular to say regarding certain of the boon companions of George as Prince, Regent, and King—Hertford and Barrymore, Hanger and ‘ the Jockey of Norfolk,’ and the rest. But there were certain men who formed the intimate *entourage* of the master of Carlton House, whose names I have already had occasion to mention and who require some further elucidatory notes, as they are not so generally known as are those more decorative companions of the Prince, who formed a brilliant constellation of wit and even genius, but most of whom were instinct with the vice and immorality of an age notable for both.

From his earliest days the Prince had been surrounded by a number of men whose one object seems to have been to stand well with him by

aiding and abetting him in his vices and in corrupting his morals. "On his release from the control of tutors and governors," writes one of his biographers, "a number of persons of perfectly opposite character were in waiting to celebrate his freedom, and administer to his gratification and delight." We have seen how Lord Malden, afterwards Earl of Essex, was an early go-between in some of the Prince's initial amatory escapades and was especially active in the matter of Mrs. Robinson's introduction to His Royal Highness; and Lord Moira was for long a useful as well as a boon companion—"showy, not solid," as someone has remarked.

But it is rather of men of the calibre of Bloomfield and Adam, McMahon and Marable, Knighton and Weltjie, that I want to say something—men who were from their stations rather servants than friends of the Prince, but who, partly through the hold they had established over him, partly through his easy-going familiarity, came to be regarded as his indispensable intimates.

The origins of some of them were obscure enough, and Louis Weltjie, who entered the Prince's service soon after the royal establishment at Brighton, with which indeed he had so much to do, began life as a ginger-bread maker, selling cakes in the street. By some means he came under the notice of the Prince, who being pleased with his manners as well as his wares,

took him into his household, where he rose to be chief cook and purveyor, and also to undertake offices of another kind for his royal patron—often of a very delicate character—in connection with the procuring of both women and money.

The consequence of this intimate connection was that Weltjie often took great liberties with his master, with the result that he at last forfeited his place entirely owing to his own folly. However, he realised a considerable fortune during his royal employment, and also during his subsequent running of a subscription house in St. James's Street. A curious story is told of the ridiculous airs he gave himself in consequence of his rise to royal favour and affluence. He had an only daughter who deeply offended him by making what he regarded as a *mésalliance* with one of the assistant royal cooks. He even went to the length of complaining to the Prince about the matter, and actually demanded the dismissal of the young man from the royal service. His master smiled, and recommended the angry little fellow to make it up and live amicably with the young man his daughter had married. Weltjie, instead of following this advice, was continually remonstrating and bringing up the subject, until the Prince's patience being exhausted, he dismissed him and gave his son-in-law his vacant place! Weltjie must have been an ugly fellow, even allowing for the licence taken with his features by Gillray in his *Funeral*

Procession of Miss Regency. He was very fat—a sort of Silenus of low life—and his death, which occurred suddenly while he was taking tea, was due to apoplexy.¹ His wife is said to have been as like him as a woman can be to a man. After being thirty years in England they neither of them could speak the language with even ordinary fluency. That Weltjie was at least as fearless a driver as 'Hellgate' Barrymore is indicated by a passage in Colman's *Records*, where the author writes: "The Prince once (in 1785) did my father the honour to send for him while cricket-matches were going forward at Brighton, at which His Royal Highness expected my father to assist. Weltjie was despatched to London to bring him down in a phaeton—phaetons being, at that time, almost as high from the ground as the first floor of a house—and Weltjie drove up and down hill like a devil. My father was then of a certain age, of sedentary habits, somewhat timid, and his legs were very short. He certainly must have felt himself out of his element."

But after all Weltjie held only a subordinate position in the Prince's household, although he was found useful by his royal employer in quite other capacities than as the head of the royal kitchen. A far more important personage was Colonel John McMahon, whose name is constantly

¹ It occurred at Chiswick, where a road is named after him. I suppose he had property there.

cropping up in connection with all sorts of matters in which the Prince was interested or involved. He was at once a servant and companion of his Royal Highness, and like many others who occupied similar positions, was of humble birth and origin. He was indeed an illegitimate son of another John McMahon who was for many years a butler in the Clements family, whose head (his employer) became Lord Leitrim. His mother was a chambermaid in the same household, in which young John was subsequently employed as odd boy to clean the knives, and so forth. When the father left the Clements' service and set up an oyster shop in Dublin he was enabled to send his son to school, where he made such good progress that he became an under usher. It appears that at a later date old McMahon remarried and had two other sons who, through their half-brother's instrumentality, became respectively Sir Thomas and Sir William McMahon.

Not caring for the life of a schoolmaster, John obtained a post as exciseman, but finding this also uncongenial, he in company with a friend named John Ferrar, the proprietor of the *Limerick Chronicle*, and other literary people, started a debating club, which proved so successful that before long he found himself in more or less affluent circumstances. Leaving Limerick he came to Dublin, where he obtained a post as a subordinate clerk in the Treasury, a position which he held for two years.

He appears to have been somewhat of a *mauvais sujet* as well as a rolling stone, and he exchanged his official desk for the more exciting life of an actor, joining a company of strolling players with whom he perambulated the country for another two years. His next employer was a Mr. William English, known as 'Buck English,' who had been attracted by his playing of the part of Scrub in *The Beaux' Stratagem*, at Ennis in County Clare. "Being a man of gallantry and excessively partial to the female sex, English soon found his new servant a most able coadjutor in his designs upon the wives and daughters of the gentry and peasantry in his neighbourhood." ¹

For a time McMahon occupied the post of servant and pander to English, until, indeed, a quarrel separated the pair, which arose in these circumstances. One evening English, having drunk too much in company with certain choice spirits, ordered McMahon to act the part of 'Scrub' for their amusement; the latter refused; whereupon his master in a rage caught up a stick and felled him to the ground; and, it is said, that had it not been for the interference of one of his guests, he would have killed him.

On recovering from the effects of this chastisement, and with the help of a subscription raised for him by some gentlemen in Tipperary, McMahon left for Dublin, where he joined a regiment which

¹ Huish.

was on the point of embarking for America and in which Lord Rawdon, afterwards Earl of Moira, was an officer. He seems to have acted as a go-between for Lord Rawdon in his intrigues as he had done for Mr. English and as he was destined to do for the Prince of Wales, and for these services he was given an ensigncy and the post of a deputy commissioner.

Having made money in the latter situation, he was enabled to purchase a lieutenancy and a company ; and returning to England, after the American War, in 1783, he settled in Bath and there met a lady whom he married and with whom he went to live at Ham Common, near Richmond. It is said that his further advancement was due to the fact that one of the royal Dukes riding from Bushey Park observed Mrs. McMahon and became a frequent visitor at their cottage, what time Lieutenant McMahon was in London consorting with various men of fashion with whom he had become acquainted. The Duke was not ungrateful for the tactful absences of the husband, and it was through his influence that McMahon became promoted to the brevet rank of Major and Lieutenant-Colonel, and was further by his aid and that of his old friend, Lord Rawdon, introduced to Carlton House, where he gradually rose to be the friend and companion of the Prince.

McMahon's position in the royal household was one of an intimate character. He was so con-

versant with the intrigues into which the Prince entered, in many of which he acted the part of procurer, that his influence and power became a by-word. If a man wanted an honour, or a woman was ready to dispense with the honour she possessed, McMahan was equally ready to render the necessary services to bring about both desires. He was a sort of caterer to the royal pleasures, and the confidant as well as an obsequious parasite of his master. McMahan became privy purse to his Royal Highness, and the possession of innumerable secrets gave him an extraordinary hold over the Prince.

The part he took in the seduction of those on whom his master had cast amatory glances is not pleasant reading, as I have already had occasion to shew ; and one of the least creditable of such actions was that in which the daughter of a clergyman was the victim, and the notorious Mrs. Hamilton a coadjutor in McMahan's wiles. So notorious did his conduct become that more than once his appointment, and emoluments, formed the subject of questions in the House of Commons, of which, by the way, he was for a time a member. The result was that his stipend of £2,000 a year as Paymaster of the Widows' Pensions was taken from him ; but a very short time after, it was announced that he had been appointed private secretary to the Prince Regent, with a salary of the same amount.

The Marable who enters so largely into the private affairs of the Prince was apparently in the employment of McMahon, and when the latter died in 1817, after being twenty years in the royal service, he may be said to have lost his benefactor. He had made himself as useful to McMahon as McMahon was to the Prince, and many of the intrigues successfully carried out for his Royal Highness were the results of the combined tact and astuteness of these two. "Mr. Marable," said Huish, "was in all respects a gentlemanly man, in fact his employment under the late King demanded that he should be the most finished gentleman; he was also what is generally termed a man of the world." He was a native of Canterbury, and entered Colonel McMahon's service through the instrumentality of Mr. Edward Taylor, brother of Sir Herbert Taylor, whose estate was, by the way, purchased by Lord Conyngham. After McMahon's death he married, and his association with the Prince's pleasures seems to have ceased; an association which had resulted in the introduction of the Mrs. B-ing-n, to whom reference has been made in a former chapter, to the royal harem, as well as in the procuring of many others whom flattery and adroit persuasion had succeeded in seducing.

Among numerous other dependants of the Prince, who held positions of trust and confidence in his household, and who became thus on friendly and

intimate terms with him, were Mr. Adam, known as 'the Prince's Adam,' and Colonel Bloomfield, afterwards successively Sir Benjamin, and Lord, Bloomfield. The name of the latter enters into an epigram written by Canning on the occasion of the death of Tomline, Bishop of Winchester, when Pelham made a bid for the vacant seat :

" Says priggish Pelham, ' May I beg a hint on
The shortest road from Exeter to Winton ? '
Says Bloomfield, ' Sure you cannot fail to light on
The shortest road through Hertford¹ and through Brighton.' "

while it was when calling on Bloomfield about the sale of a horse which he was anxious to acquire for the Prince that Gronow tells how, " while conversing we were interrupted by the entrance of the Prince, attended by McMahon and the eccentric ' Tommy Tit.' His Royal Highness was in an angry humour, and blurted out in his rage, ' I will not allow those maid-servants to look at me when I go in and out ; and if I find they do so again, I will have them discharged.' " ²

When Lady Conyngham came into power she caused the King to dismiss Bloomfield, whom for some reason she cordially disliked, and to take in his place Sir William Knighton, who was friendly to her interests and almost a tool in her hands.

¹ Lady Hertford.

² General Baylie subsequently told Gronow that the Prince " constantly complained of the servants staring at him, and that strict orders had been given to discharge any one caught repeating the offence."

Bloomfield was responsible for much of the success attending those splendid balls and *fêtes* which the Prince was fond of giving at Carlton House and The Pavilion; and at one time he was a constant attendant on the Prince when he rode or drove in the Park. He was of the famous dinner party which the Prince gave in order to test the quality of Palmer's claret. General Palmer had, through the fascination of a charming widow whom he met when travelling from Lyons to Paris, become possessed, in return for a large sum of money, of a considerable property in France, particularly suitable, as he was told, for the production of claret. With the help of a man named Gray he set to work to develop the industry, his large London acquaintance enabling him to advertise the merits of the wine to advantage in the chief clubs and elsewhere. The patronage of the Prince was to put the coping stone of success on the venture, and the Prince, who was friendly with Palmer, agreed to give the wine a careful test.

The dinner took place and was attended by a select party of connoisseurs, among whom was Lord Hertford, known as 'Red Herrings' because of the flaming colour of his hair, and husband of the Prince's *chère amie*; among others present were Bloomfield, Sir Thomas Tyrwhitt and Sir William Knighton. When the wine was produced it was unanimously approved, the Prince being particularly pleased with it and quoting Shake-

speare (as was frequently his habit) to the effect that it was worthy "the holy Palmer's kiss." The success of the claret seemed, indeed, assured; but Lord Hertford alone kept silence concerning it; and when asked by the Prince the reason, replied that he greatly preferred a claret which Carbonell habitually furnished to the royal table. Thereupon the Prince ordered a bottle of the wine to be produced; and after a fresh test, the Prince agreed with Hertford's judgment. Palmer left Carlton House much annoyed, and when Tyrwhitt tried to console him by saying that the taste of the gourmets had been spoiled by the anchovy sandwiches which the Prince had demanded in order to clear the palates of the convives, he exclaimed wrathfully, "No, it was the confounded red herrings;" a reply that very nearly led to a duel.

Bloomfield owed his rise in the royal favour to his musical abilities. It is known that the Prince was devoted to music, one of the few things in which he resembled George III., and that he played the 'cello (he was a pupil of the famous Crossdill) with even greater skill than his grandfather, Frederick, Prince of Wales, had done. His singing was also far above the amateur average. Indeed his musical taste was one of his most attractive attributes—some may think his most attractive. On one occasion, being at the Pavilion, he was anxious to find someone who could accompany him in his

playing the 'cello, and having heard that a certain Captain Bloomfield, then stationed with his regiment at Brighton, was an accomplished performer, he immediately sent for him ; and thus began the intimacy which lasted till Lady Conyngham's antagonism—said to have been caused through her attributing to Bloomfield's influence the enforced return of certain jewels presented to her by the Prince which it turned out on enquiry really belonged to the Crown—brought about his dismissal, with the solatium, however, of a peerage and the post of ambassador to Sweden, where his affable manners made him as general a favourite as he had been in the Prince's circle.

During the latter days of George IV.'s life Sir William Knighton was his most intimate servant. He owed his rise to two circumstances which had a cumulative effect on his fortunes: one was his friendship with Lady Conyngham, or perhaps one should rather say her enmity to Bloomfield ; the other was the fact that he was an executor of Colonel McMahon, in which capacity he came into possession of a mass of important and secret correspondence relating to the trial of Queen Caroline, as well as to Lady Jersey and other fair ones whom McMahon had been instrumental in introducing to the Prince. Having become master of these important documents, he took a step which was at once honest and politic, he placed them all in the hands of the King, who exhibited his

recognition of Knighton's tact by conferring a baronetcy on him, and by appointing him his private secretary in the place of Bloomfield.

The *Memoirs* which Sir William Knighton has left is an easily accessible book, and in it may be read the details of its writer's rise to royal favour and the many services he rendered the King and the rather imperious, very grasping lady who had done so much to help him and who, according to Gronow, used him as her tool.

There were few among the dependants of George IV. who at one time or another were not called upon to render assistance or undertake services of a questionable character on his behalf, and some of those I have mentioned have received blame for doing things for which their master was really responsible. Certain of them, like McMahon and Marable, seem to have had a *flair* for such things, and were thus congenially employed; others by force of circumstance were compelled to associate themselves as agents in dubious and sometimes disgraceful matters.

Sir William Knighton was no exception, and his remarkable attempt to obtain possession of those documents belonging to Mrs. Fitzherbert which proved the fact of her marriage to the Prince, an attempt which caused her to deposit these evidences at Coutts's, is among the less creditable events of his busy life. On the other hand the fact that George IV. left no debts (many will

think he had received enough from the country to make this no merit) was largely due to Knighton's careful management of the royal private finances. Indeed at the King's decease it was actually found that he had hoarded no less than £10,000 in various receptacles; and Greville tells, with that unction with which he pounced on anything concerning George IV.'s peculiarities, that there were discovered no fewer than five hundred pocket-books, each containing bank notes, as well as any number of trinkets, and among them "a prodigious quantity of hair—women's hair of all colours and lengths, some locks with the powder and pomatum sticking to them, heaps of women's gloves, *gages d'amour*, which he had got at balls."

One can visualise Sir William Knighton and the Duke of Wellington going through these evidences of a life of pleasure, and destroying in a sort of holocaust this mass of idle and pathetic mementos. What a funeral pyre of love it must have been, as the burnt fragments passed into the smoke that rose to the regardless skies, and Lady Conyngham was packing her trunks and laying hands on everything she could, and the dead hero of a hundred amatory combats lay inert amid the splendours of his historic castle!

George may have discarded his mistresses and his friends, but he never gave away any of his personal belongings; and all the uniforms and clothes, even the boots he had worn and the

handkerchiefs he had used, for half a century were there to be ticketed and sold together with "sixteen hundredweight of that famous snuff—The Prince's mixture," which he used to get from Fribourg's in the Haymarket. He had outlived so many of his boon companions, had, indeed, known several generations of them, that he seems to have clung to these tangible memorials of the past as the last link with those who had died or from whom he had estranged himself.

What memories the man must have had when disease gradually withdrew him from the company of those who had succeeded his earlier intimate circle, and such as Sheridan and Fox and Burke had given place to Brummell and Jack Lee; and Admiral Nagle and Sir Andrew Barnard, Glenlyon and Hertford, and Lowther, Conyngham and Mount Charles, had filled *their* place; when the ghosts of Harriot Vernon and Mary Robinson and the rest had faded before the very tangible presence of the last of that long list of favourites, the Marchioness of Conyngham, with whom he passed his latter, monotonous round of daily existence. He could hardly have looked back on a single act which had been for the advantage of any but himself; his unpopularity had brought the Crown into disrepute and the country to the verge of revolution. His life had, indeed, been essentially one of self gratification. But he possessed courage, and it must have required all he had of this quality to

enable him, lying there with Death hovering for days about his curtains, to face an end of so much misdoing—misdoing on his own account and misdoing which he had caused in so many others, who were the tools and victims of his unrestrained passions.

It remains, after saying what I have concerning these victims and tools, to record something of those who were the companions in rakishness of a prince who, with one exception, stands forth as the chief example of a rake of English royalty.



CHAPTER X

COLONEL GEORGE HANGER

ONE of the principal names which occurs in the annals of the Regency, so far as those annals are connected with the private life of the Regent, is that of George Hanger. It is a little curious why this should be so, as, although he flits about the scene, his part was neither an outstanding nor an important one; and it is probable that had he not, in his later life, indulged in a certain literary activity, we should simply have known of him as one of those boon companions of the Prince who have obtained unenviable notoriety through their association with the first gentleman of Europe.

In the year 1801, however, appeared two volumes of reminiscences entitled *The Life, adventures and opinions of Col. George Hanger, written by himself*, and from this, and other scattered sources, one is able to construct something resembling a short biography; although, to be sure, the work in question is so cut up by chapters on general subjects of ethics, not immediately connected with

the author's career, that the title of the work promises more than the work itself fulfils.

The writer of the short memoir of Hanger which appears in *The Eccentric Mirror*,¹ says, "few characters better deserve a place in a collection like the present than the Hon. George Hanger . . . his life may perhaps appear more strongly marked with profligacy and improvidence than with eccentricity; but, at least, his example may afford a useful lesson to others to avoid the rocks of dissipation on which his fortunes were wrecked;" while Wraxall gives the following vignette of the man who possessed a shrewdness of outlook which to some extent counterbalanced his less attractive qualities. "The Hon. George Hanger, now become an Irish baron in his old age by the successive decease of his two brothers, the Lords Coleraine, might rather be considered as a humble retainer at Carlton House than justly numbered among the friends of the heir apparent. Poor even to a degree of destitution, without profession or regular employment, subsisting from day to day by expedients, some of them not the most reputable, he was regarded as a sort of outcast from decent society. Yet he did not altogether want a degree of eccentric talent. . . . He is an author, having published, nearly twenty years ago, his 'Life, Adventures, and Opinions;' a book in which, together with much absurdity, may be found

¹ In four volumes. It was edited by G. H. Wilson.

some curious facts and anecdotes of his own time.”¹

According to Hanger’s own account² of his life he was the son of a country gentleman who had sat in three Parliaments not without influence on the Ministry of the day, and “to whose judgment and opinions every minister paid the greatest respect.” “My father,” he adds, “never solicited a place; and I am confident he never received a bribe. He purchased the commissions his sons had, during his life: one for my brother, the present Lord Coleraine, in the blue horse, and my own in the guards. . . . he was a strenuous supporter of the King and Constitution . . . was affluent and independent in point of fortune . . . and I believe from my heart he was as honest a man as ever stepped in leathern shoe.”³

George was first sent to school at Reading, and afterwards to the Rev. Mr. Fountain’s at Marylebone, whence he passed into Eton, where he became a creditable Latin scholar, although he had a decided aversion from Greek. Even when at Eton he appears to have begun his career of approved rake, for he tells us that “my hours out of school

¹ Wraxall, *Posthumous Memoirs*, vol. iii, p. 336.

² For a detailed account of the Hangers, Barons Coleraine, see *The Complete Peerage*, by G. E. C., vol. iii (1913), pp. 365-368.

³ His grandfather was Sir George Hanger, of Driffild Hall, in Gloucestershire; but he says: “How he acquired the title I know not. I never heard my father say that his father inherited the title; or who my grandfather’s father was, or of what profession or calling.”

in the day were employed in the sports of the field, being already very fond of my dog and gun. By night, game of another kind engrossed my whole attention ; ” and he passed as much time as was then possible in women’s society, as he did in after life. “ A carpenter’s wife,” he says, “ was the first object of my early affections ; nor can I well express the nature of my obligations to her. Frequently have I risked breaking my neck in getting over the roof of my boarding house at night, to pass a few hours with some favourite grisette at Windsor.” One of these young ladies was the daughter of a greengrocer who was accustomed to solace such of the scholar’s hours as he could give to her.

“ The big boys,” he proceeds, “ had a very wicked custom every Sunday of resorting to Castle prayers at Windsor ; not to seek the Lord, but to seek the *inamoratas* who constantly and diligently attended to receive our devotions. Besides in summer time, it was our custom to walk in the public promenade in the Little Park. My father lived only six miles from Windsor, and consequently I was as well known to every family in that town and neighbourhood as the King himself ; but, notwithstanding this, I constantly walked with some fair frail one arm in arm, with as much *sang-froid* as I now would walk in Kensington Gardens with a beautiful woman.”

After leaving Eton, where he had certainly

imbibed some of the teaching contained in the lighter forms of classic lore, he was, as being destined for the army, not sent to either of the English Universities, but to Göttingen, whence, after studying mathematics, fortification, and the German language, he passed on to Hanover and Hesse Cassel, remaining in Germany three years. At the latter places he was introduced into the polite society of those towns, and was favourably regarded by members of the royal family, such as Prince Charles, eldest brother of our Queen Charlotte, besides making many friends among the distinguished soldiers whom he met.

In the meanwhile (January, 1771) he had obtained an ensigncy in the Guards, and shewed himself eager and zealous as a budding soldier. At the close of the three years, after having vainly besought his father to furnish him the means of serving with the army of Count Romanoff against the Turks, he returns to England through what he describes as "that most detestable of all countries—Holland."

"I was early introduced into life," he tells us, "and often kept both good and bad company; associated with men both good and bad, and with lewd women, and women not lewd, wicked and not wicked;—in short with men and women of every description, and of every rank, from the highest to the lowest, from St. James's to St. Giles's; in palaces and night cellars; from the

drawing-room to the dust cart. The difficulties and misfortunes I have experienced, I am inclined to think, have proceeded from none of the above-mentioned causes, but from happening to come into life at a period of the greatest extravagance and profusion. Human nature is in general frail, and mine I confess has been wonderfully so: I could not stand the temptations of that age of extravagance, elegance, and pleasure: indeed, I am not the only sufferer, for most of my contemporaries, and many of ten times my opulence, have been ruined."

That is, indeed, quite an impartial description of the life George Hanger led; the life led by the majority of those rakes of the Regency of which he was a typical, if not an outstanding, example. I have already, in an earlier chapter, recorded an anecdote of his amatory adventures, one in which he came into contact with the Prince and which had such a surprising sequel. His own accounts of such matters are, of course, not so clearly defined; he was not of those who kiss and tell, but rather of those who are willing, nay anxious, that the world shall know they have kissed, but are far too well-mannered to give the chapter and verse of their adventurous actions. For George Hanger, in spite of many shortcomings and sins of commission, was essentially a gentleman, and he had, besides, a fund of common-sense and a kind of talent which, in a less hectic

environment than that in which he found himself, might have resulted in his making a name in other ways than those with which it is nowadays connected.

As Wraxall, whose vignette of him is not an altogether fair one, says, he possessed a degree of eccentric talent, but the anecdotes that survive of him accentuate the eccentricity rather than the talent, and the following is a good specimen of this. Parenthetically, I may state that Huish, giving his version, indicates that the wager was of the kind initiated by some of the titled sharpers who surrounded the Prince in order to extract money from him. In this case I think the implication is unfair, Hanger's general character, careless, improvident, wild and reckless as it was, not supporting such a charge.

He was always fond of making curious wagers, but perhaps none was more eccentric than this one concerning the relative racing capabilities of turkeys and geese which he evolved and which resulted in the Prince losing several thousands of pounds. During one of the convivial parties at Carlton House, we are told, Hanger purposely introduced a discussion as to the relative powers of progression of a turkey and a goose, giving it as his opinion that the turkey was the faster traveller. The Prince, who had a great opinion of Hanger's judgment in such matters, at once agreed with his assertion, and numerous heavy



GEORGEY a' Cockhorse.

COLONEL GEORGE HANGER
(BY GILLRAY).

(face p. 190)

bets were laid on the result of a match which was there and then arranged to be run between twenty geese and twenty turkeys. The race was to be for a stake of £500. The Prince with his usual enthusiasm took the keenest interest in the matter, and Hanger was deputed to select the best and most likely birds that could be procured. A certain Mr. Berkeley was the leader of the goose party, and on the day appointed the antagonists with their flocks duly appeared on the scene.

The match began, and for a few hours the turkeys appeared to have it all their own way, as they were at least a couple of miles ahead. As evening drew on, however, the turkeys were seen to stretch their necks towards the trees which lined the road, what time the Prince was assiduously engaged in urging them on with a pole to which a piece of red cloth was attached. Presently first one and then another, eluding their drovers, flew into the branches of the neighbouring trees, from which nothing would dislodge them; not even the barley that was liberally sprinkled on the road having the power to seduce them from their resting places; and as the geese came along, and quickly passed their competitors, they were declared the winners.

This was but one example of many such ridiculous wagers which the Prince and his friends (and many who were anything but his friends) engaged in, and which generally resulted in a

considerable loss to his Royal Highness. In such things Hanger was found to be of an inventive and resourceful assistance to the royal killing of time and squandering of money.

Nor was he only helpful in such ways; as a medium between the Prince and money-lenders, and the Prince and fair ladies, he had his effective uses. He was, besides, an ideal boon companion: bluff, hearty and amusing; indeed he had, from this point of view, but one defect, he was always hard up; and a story is told of how he and Sheridan and Fox, and *an illustrious individual* (no other, of course, than the Prince), once found themselves at a convivial party at the Staffordshire Arms, where, after they had caroused with certain dashing Cyprians, as they were at that time called, they found that the whole resources of the party were insufficient to pay the reckoning, and Sheridan, who had become so drunk that he had to be put to bed, was left as a sort of hostage with the landlord. No wonder when the old king heard of these escapades, and other similar vagaries, he is said to have exclaimed angrily: "Damn Sherry, and I must hang—hang—Hanger, for they will break my heart and ruin the hopes of my country."

Those who are acquainted with Hanger's curious autobiography will remember how the self-revelations of that work are interrupted by dissertations on certain ethical questions on which the author

certainly took good care to make himself thoroughly informed. It is in these parts of the work that Hanger exhibits a certain power of thought and deduction strangely at variance with the wild and dissolute life he for a time led. Thus we have a chapter on "Advice to the Prelates and Legislators how to correct the Immorality and Jacobinism of the present age, and at the same time increase the Revenue of the Country." It would be curious indeed to find such a man as Hanger asserting that "the vices of the present day require a radical and vigorous reform; the sooner it is effected the better," and urging "a more strict attention to the duties of the Sabbath" than then prevailed; were it not pretty obvious that much that he says is 'wrote sarcastic.'

In another chapter we find what the author calls "Advice to lovely Cyprians and the Fair Sex in general, how to conduct themselves in future, and to practise with greater satisfaction the three cardinal virtues, namely, Drinking, Gaming, and Intriguing;" in which he exhibits a knowledge of that section of society which he addresses, both extensive and peculiar; while his views on "Matrimony and Polygamy" probably seemed far more advanced in the time of King George III. than they would do in those of King George V.

Among the many strange events of Hanger's adventurous life was his attachment to the 'Lovely Ægyptia of Norwood,' of which he gives an account

in his book. He speaks there of his nuptial day, so I suppose he was actually married to the young lady ; at any rate he seems to have been desperately in love with her. She, however, played him false with a tinker, so that the song which says she was fond of crooning,

“ Tom Tinker’s my true love,
And I am his dear ;
And all the world over
His budget I’ll bear,”

possessed a significant application of which he appears to have been at first, at any rate, ignorant.

On Hanger’s return to England from Germany he was, he tells us, “ almost instantly launched into the great world, and introduced into the most distinguished companies in the country.” Of these, of course, Carlton House formed the focus, and it is as an *habitué* of this place and for a time a friend of its royal master that he is now known. He acknowledges that he was extremely extravagant in his dress. “ For one winter’s dress clothes only,” he confesses, “ it cost me nine hundred pounds,” and he proceeds to give details of sartorial profusion which seem far more strange to us in these more modest days (modest as to attire, I mean) than it did then when young men of fashion rivalled Solomon in all his glory, and became indebted to other kinds of Solomons as a melancholy but inevitable consequence.

Gambling does not appear to have been one of

Hanger's vices, however ; at least, if we are to believe his own statement (and he was remarkably outspoken about himself) that he was "never fond of cards or dice, nor even played for any considerable sum of money ; at least, no further than the fashion of the times compelled me ;" in which last phrase many will, however, see a contradiction of the original statement. "I claim," he goes on to say, "no merit whatever from abstaining from play, as it afforded me no pleasure : if it had, I certainly should have gratified that passion, as I have done some others." In another form of gambling, however, he certainly did take pleasure ; and his winnings on the Turf must have been considerable in spite of the great expense of keeping race-horses and a training establishment at Newmarket. It would appear that, unlike so many of his contemporaries, Hanger really for a time, at any rate, made racing pay, and it was, as he himself says, "the delightful pleasures of that age, and the frailty of my own nature," that caused his ruin, and led him to a debtor's prison.

The strange autobiography he has left us is full of curious stories exhibiting the manners and customs of the day as they were exemplified in the life of a man of fashion, for its writer was equally at home in the flash dens and night cellars of the town as he was in the gay ball-rooms of the west-end ; the same George Hanger whether

visiting Hawkes the highwayman in Newgate, or waiting on the Prince at Carlton House.

Like the majority of his contemporaries of a certain class, Hanger was continually engaged in adventures of an amatory or sporting character, some of which he records with characteristic verbiage and detail. They are not likely to be found specially interesting by a modern reader, but are not without value as exemplifying the manners and customs of a certain stratum of society in those days. Notwithstanding his hectic manner of living, he shows himself an unsparing castigator of the backslidings of others, being particularly severe on the merchant class which gambled heavily on 'Change, but reprehended others playing deep at clubs and such-like resorts ; indeed not hesitating to brand such as monsters of iniquity and hypocrisy.

An incident in his career caused him to enter the Hessian service, the troops of which state were bound for America. Let him tell of this circumstance in his own way:

“ After a few years' enjoyment of every pleasure and satisfaction in life,” he writes, “ which that age of pleasure, extravagance, and elegance was calculated to afford, a sudden and unforeseen event took place, the result of which I have ever had cause to repent from that early hour to the present moment. I do not wish to rip up old grievances, especially as one of the parties who profited at

my expense is dead, and the other is a near friend. It is sufficient to say that I conceived myself most unjustly treated relative to a promotion that took place in the first regiment of foot guards, in which corps I had then the honour of being an ensign. Great parliamentary interest was the cause of it, to the entire destruction of my promotion in a service to which I was most devoutly attached."

He thus quitted the Guards when the American War began, and he was destined to serve in the New World as well as to experience some of those adventures which always dogged his footsteps and from which he not infrequently emerged by the skin of his teeth.

Having joined the Hessian troops, he was appointed, by the Landgrave of Hesse Cassel, a captain in his corps of Jagers. Whereupon he instructed Tattersall (whom he calls an old friend) to sell all his horses. He then put his estate, worth some £24,000, in the hands of another friend, Wyatt, to dispose of; made his bow at Court under the *ægis* of the Hessian Minister, dressed in the elaborate uniform of which he became in after years so fond, and sailed from Portsmouth for the seat of war, after having had an interview with Lord North, who vainly tried to persuade him to remain in this country, and who, even when his advice was disregarded, did his best for the young man by warmly recommending him to the Landgrave.

It is unnecessary to follow Hanger in his American campaign. He himself gives some incidents from it in a chapter of his autobiography entitled "Interesting Particulars relative to Col. George Hanger when in America ;" and I must refer the curious reader to that source of information. I may note, however, that during his absence his friend Wyatt died and his estate was "sold before a Master in Chancery, at Public auction, for little more than half its value." In America he came much in contact with Sir Henry Clinton and the ill-fated Major André, of both of whom he speaks in terms of friendly recognition ; and he appears to have proved himself a capable officer and to have acted with courage and discretion on more than one trying occasion.

But his absence from England was in other ways unfortunate, for his godmother, the Duchess of St. Albans (she had been a Miss Roberts, a rich heiress) died, and although she had made a will in his favour, which had been witnessed by his mother, she had become acquainted with a Mr. Roberts during Hanger's American soldiering, and he proving to her Grace's satisfaction that he was a relation of hers, although she had never seen or heard of him before, she thereupon made a new will leaving everything to her new-found kinsman.

Hanger's return home nearly occurred under surprising circumstances. He was on board one of

two ships bound for Georgia, where he was going to join a regiment commanded by one of his friends, Colonel Ferguson, when one of the ships was caught in a violent gale, dismasted, and in this condition was carried out of her course, and finally made St. Ives, in Cornwall! It appears that the report got about that Major Hanger and a corps of soldiers had arrived at St. Ives, and, adds he—"the kindest enquiries after my health were made (as I have since been informed) by some of those philanthropic gentlemen who had shared in plundering me of my estate." Being, however, on board the luckier ship, he was able to reach his proper destination; but, later, when with Lord Cornwallis's army in North Carolina, he caught the yellow fever at Charlotte, where Colonel Tarleton, subsequently to become another *habitué* of Carlton House, was just recovering from the same epidemic. After suffering many miseries, among which was the fact that he and five other officers while still in the throes of the fever were perforce carried on in waggons with the Army, he being the only one of the band who survived, he eventually reached South Carolina, "all but dead," as he pathetically records; and there encountered Lord Rawdon (afterwards Earl of Moira), yet another of the Prince's set.

At length he set sail for England, calling at the Bermudas on the way, having thus escaped capture with Lord Cornwallis's army, and only

avoiding being taken by De Grasse's squadron by another piece of good luck.

Among many interesting stories and accounts of conversations which Hanger interpolates in his very discursive narrative, a specimen of his prophetic foresight may be given. Speaking of the Americans he says : " I will risk a further opinion relative to America : should I live to a good old age, I am confident that I shall hear of the Northern and Southern powers in America waging war with each other ; when one party will solicit assistance from France ; the other, from Great Britain." A prophecy which he did not live to see realised, but which, as we all know, was substantially fulfilled.

Among the many friends Hanger made in America was that Colonel McMahon of whom I have had occasion to speak already ; and it was to him (on his leaving for England at an earlier date) jointly with Tarleton, that Hanger gave a power of attorney to endeavour to put his affairs in order prior to his own arrival. It was arranged that he himself was to remain at Calais during this negotiation, until, indeed, as he says, " I knew how the land lay in England." McMahon behaved generously to him, giving him a credit on his London banker for five hundred pounds ; and it was " to this friend," he adds, " I certainly owe all the happiness and misfortunes I have undergone ; for, had it not been for his exertions, I never should have come to England. . . . Would

to God I had never to this hour placed my foot on British ground."

Richard Tattersall also did his best for his friend, and took counsel with McMahon and Tarleton as to how matters could most profitably be arranged. With the result that he sent Hanger a letter inviting him to cross over from Calais and to make his house at Hyde Park Corner his own. But hardly had Hanger taken up his residence there before, sallying out one day, he was arrested for a debt of between seven and eight hundred pounds. He seems to have weathered this small storm, and we find him employed by the Directors of the East India Company as a recruiting officer with a salary of six hundred a year, as well as receiving three hundred a year as Equerry to the Prince of Wales. Unluckily for him, on account of a dispute between the Board of Control and the Directors, he lost the former, and about the same time was deprived of the latter, through the arrangements made by Parliament relative to the Prince's affairs, which resulted in the reduction of the royal household.

These financial blows coming on an already depleted estate gradually brought him to the verge of indigence, and on June 2nd, 1798, he surrendered himself to the King's Bench, of which place he has left us an interesting account. There he remained till April 6th, 1799, on which day he received his discharge as the result of obtaining

a considerable sum of money following an Arbitration case in the Court of King's Bench, which enabled him to compound with his creditors by paying 7s. 6d. in the £, he binding himself to pay the remainder from such property he might receive by will, reversion or entail.

The autobiography I have referred to was published in 1801, and closes with Hanger having set up as a coal merchant in the May of the previous year, and apparently being indebted to no one but "three noble Earls—the largest sum two hundred pounds, the smallest one hundred." He had been amongst the earliest of the companions of George, Prince of Wales, who found him so amusing that in after years he did not forget him, and on his return from America took him down to Brighton, where he was a sort of standing dish at the Pavilion, as he was a constant visitor at Carlton House. "In all my days," he writes, "I never passed my time more agreeably or with greater happiness; they were indeed the pleasantest days of my life. I had good health, good spirits; was not in debt; and had no earthly care whatever to distract my mind." For some sixteen years he enjoyed the friendship of the Prince; and as he has nothing but good to say of a man of whom much ill has been said, it is but fair to record his verdict.

"If," he asserts, "I were not to acknowledge the obligations I owe to the Prince of Wales,

I should be worse than ungrateful. In affluence, in poverty, at liberty, and when in prison, his kindness to me has never varied ; but, for one action beyond all others, I am truly indebted to him : when a prisoner, and deprived of the power of vindicating myself in public circles ; where the ever-busy tongue of calumny tried to strip me of the only wealth I possessed, my character as an officer and a gentleman ; he nobly came forward, pledging himself to the falsehood of the assertion, and stemmed the tide of public calumny, until justice and the law of the land proved the baseness of the aspersion, and covered my enemies with shame."

From a variety of other sources we catch glimpses of George Hanger, who, on the shewing of most, was once one of the wildest and most amusing of the companions of the Prince of Wales. There was a strain of eccentricity in his character, as may be seen exemplified in his writings as well as in the anecdotes that have survived about him ; he was, too, fond of low as well as of high company, was extravagant to a degree, and dissipated as were most of those who learnt their lessons from, or taught lessons to, the First Gentleman of Europe. But he possessed talent and a certain commonsense outlook on life, and he hated hypocrisy like the devil.

During his later years he lived in a small cottage at Somers Town, near the Hampstead Road, and

it was either there, or more likely in a Soho lodging which he once had, that he regaled the Prince, the Duke of York, and some of their friends, on baked shoulder of mutton and baked potatoes, washed down with porter, to the delight of the epicures, who vowed they had never enjoyed a meal so much.¹

Hanger once fought a duel with Sheridan, as the result of some horse-play at Carlton House ; but the pistols were minus bullets, and although Sherry affected to fall at the first discharge, and was thought by his antagonist to be killed, he duly turned up next day very much alive, to Hanger's amazement—and relief.

In 1814, Hanger's brother, Lord Coleraine (known as Blue Hanger, from the habitual colour of his clothes, a man noted for the charm and perfection of his manners of the *vieille cour*) died, and George succeeded him.² But the new peer found no pleasure in his title, and whenever possible repudiated it ; *apropos* of which idiosyncrasy Shergold, in his *Recollections of Brighton*, tells the following story : “ A gentleman I knew once met him in Bond Street, and putting on a humble air, walked up to him, hat in hand, and said, ‘ I hope I have the honour to see your Lordship in perfect

¹ Cf. Thackeray in *Vanity Fair*, where Steyne tells Becky that he had been dining with the Prince on boiled mutton and turnips. The novelist may have taken the idea from the Hanger anecdote. The story of Hanger's dinner is given, *inter alia*, in *The English Spy*.

² It is supposed that George was the author of the story *Kitty of Coleraine*.

health.' 'What do you mean, you scoundrel, by calling a man names he is ashamed of?' was the unexpected reply. 'Whether Lord Coleraine be up there' (pointing to the sky), 'or down there' (pointing in a contrary direction), 'I know not, or care not; but I am, as I always was, plain George Hanger.' "

During his latter days at Somers Town he seems to have spent much of his time in a favourite public house close by, where, no doubt, with the silk handkerchief round his neck which he habitually wore, and his well-known short club-stick under his arm, he fought his American battles over again, and recounted stories of the days of his affluence when he sunned himself in the beams of royal favour, drank deep, spent his money with a large gesture, and was a noted *vainqueur* among the fair and frail. Some time before January, 1823, when in his seventy-first year, he married his housekeeper,¹ by whom he appears to have had a son previously, and died on March 31st, 1824, at the age of 72, having been born in October, 1751; and with him the title he had spurned became extinct.

It is said by one historian of the period² that in his later years he was "discarded from the prince's parties, on account of his low propensities;" but it is more likely that the alienation

¹ See *The Complete Peerage*, by G. E. C., Vol. III (1913), p. 369.

² Lloyd.

came about owing to his increasing age, restricted circumstances, and the rise of a fresh bevy of favourites who supplanted those earlier ones who had jested with Sheridan and played deep with Fox.

The following epitaph, written by himself, was found among his papers and has been communicated to me, together with the annexed letters, by Miss Alice Bosville James, to whose grandfather the latter were addressed. Letters of Hanger are of rare occurrence, and as these exhibit that strain of eccentricity combined with shrewdness which he possessed, they are given as interesting documents although they date from a period later than that in which he exhibited his rakish propensities.

Near this Place
Lies the Body of
General George Hanger ;
A well-known character

He departed this Life

He lived and died a true and firm Believer
In *One God* ; and in *One God Only*.

He was a Practical Christian as far as his Frail Nature would allow ; persuaded that no man can be honest or just who does not act up to those Divine Principles laid down to Man in the Four Evangelists.

Epitaph.

Here lies a Man who never would believe
Except in *One* who never can deceive !

And
That is *God*.

I

MY DEAR CHARLES,

On the *first* of Jan. 1813 I will receive you at six o'clock. The Papers announce Earl Moira and Lady Landon dining on Saturday last with Lord Liverpool at which dinner Lord Castlereagh and Lord Millwill were present—his Lordship has *nothing to do with* the present Ministers, Oh no, not in the least. Now I will ask one simple question, Had Lord Moira not accepted the Governor Generalship of India would he ever have been invited to a *Cabinet* dinner—all I can say in his favour, is, that he certainly was in good company, with young Jenkey and Castlereagh. There was but one Scotch man at the table which astonishes me—I suppose you know that Government *positively gave it out* that although it has been stated in the *Moniteur* that Buonaparte arrived at Paris on the 19th of Decr. that it has not been made known to them by any means to allow them officially to acknowledge that he was in Paris even on the 24th Decr. Fresh news from Russia how wonderful and it is not over as yett, for the French have considerably above 300 miles to march before they gett over the Vistula or Niemen Rivers. The success is so great that it absolutely appears like a dream. Observe the *Moniteur* writes that the Emperor since his arrival at Paris has been so taken up with his ministers that he has

not been able to *shew himself* in Public, I ask you this question without sacrificing above five minutes in each day could he not have shewn himself in the Balconie which looks over the Tuilleries Gardens, to shew the People that *he was there* ; this looks strange.

As ever most friendly

G. HANGER.

Decr. 29th 1812.

To

Major Chas. James

No. 3 Gloster Place


New Road

Near Lisson Green.

II

MY DEAR CHARLES,

I forgott this was New Years Day. I hear there is a grand assembly of respectable characters from which your absence can not by any means be dispensed with to assemble at Col. Bosville's to meet Mrs. Cobett, Gale Jones, Bonny and Frost ; the first Bishop that is to be made under the *new Régime* my old friend Parson East, after giving you all the Sacrament of the dinner and the *appropriate Oath* will finish the Evening Service with a Sermon the text taken from the Song of Solomon " Our Little Sister has no breasts, What shall we do unto her on the day when she is called for." You surely have not

The foregoing verse is very applicable to you
and those respectable gentlemen above mentioned
your ^{more} ~~such~~ worthy characters are not to be
found in any country, you know on what
esteem I hold them.  Those this will
never be your fate. I however should
that ever be, I will both write & cry your
Dying speech & piety in your last moments
It is your duty now I think to make
an appointment with me, & to keep it
as ever most friendly yours

✓ 5
1 Jan^y 1813 -

G. H.

I think the last line of Morris's song was
applicable to Lord Morris when he
dined at Lord Liverpool's cabinet dinner, thus
alluded -

He went to master Turkey
By Castleman attended
And took in such good company
how his morals must be mended
How would you

A LETTER BY COL. GEORGE HANGER.

(face p. 208)

forgotten Capt. Morris's song made on Billy Pitt—

He went to Daddy Jenky
By trainer Hall attended
Good Luck in such good company
How his morals must be mended.
Bow wow wow.

The foregoing verse is very applicable to you and those respectable *gentlemen* above mentioned, four more worthy characters are not to be found in any country, you know in what esteem I hold them; I hope this¹ will never be your fate, however should that ever be, I will both write and cry your dying speech and piety in your last moments. It is *your duty now* I think to make an appointment with me and to keep it.

As ever most friendly yours

1st Jan. 1813.

G. H.——

I think the last line in the verse of Morris's song was applicable to Lord Moira when he dined at Ld. Liverpool's Cabinet, dinner, thus altered—

He went to master Jenkey
By Castlereagh attended
Good Luck in such good company
How his morals must be mended
Bow wow wow.

To

Major Chas. James
No. 3 Gloster Place
New Road
Near Lisson Green.

¹ Here is a sketch of a hanging man. See illustration opposite,

III

MY DEAR CHARLES,

I can not refrain writing you respecting a Paragraph in the Paper which has given me pleasure beyond expression. Louis 18th has sent 600 Livres to several Charities in Paris to pay for Masses to be said for the Soul of Lebedoyère who was lately executed. Oh the Foutu Bigot, in heavens name when will all Be-sotted Superstitious ceremonies cease and the true worship of *one God* be established. You, *I know for certain*, if of any Religion are a Roman Catholick; you know it was only a very few years that I found that out yett I am certain you have too much good sense to believe in Transubstantiation and the Ass on which Christ rode into Jerusalem walking over the Mediterranean Sea and up *the middle* of the River into Verona where her bones are strewn to this very day and sworn to by the Priests—The Flight through the Heavens of the Virgin Mary's House to Loretto, *Pro pudor*. When will their wretched and wicked follies cease—I hear Louis 18th has sent the Prince Regent the Order of the Holy Ghost. This is a sovereign remedy (or said to be) against all calamities and misfortunes; however it did not save Louis the 16th from the guillotine. I shall have a Pig soon fitt to kill when I shall send you a piece of my own pork clean fed and a goose which is better than game for a Poor man with a numerous offspring—I forgott to tell you something that will

make you Laugh, when my Boy John was appointed to a Place in the Custom House they sent for the Register of his Birth and Christening it came out at last that he *never had been* Christened ; however I gott over that by getting two persons to make oath to the day of his birth and age. You will fully agree with me that this ceremonie having been omitted would be no impediment to his Entering the Kingdom of Heaven though it was some impediment to his entering the Kingdom of the Custom House. Pray are your Lovely babes christened ? How wretched affairs look in France, I have not the smallest doubt when the Allied troops quitt the Country that it must terminate in a civil war. Pray write me all the News for here I am absolutely rusticated and know nothing—How shockingly that Wretch our beloved Ferdinand is going on. *Your chosen* Religion is the whole cause of the misery of that unhappy Country. If you do not soon gett something by Earl Moira's patronage I recommend

you to go to Spain, the *Education* you gott at the *Jesuit's College* at St. Omars will strongly recommend you to an Employment on the *Inquisition* ; as the Jesuits are now re-established they will again have great weight

God bless you my dear

Charles and believe me a

real and true friend G. HANGER.

Tompson near Thetford

Nov. 2nd 1815.

IV

DEAR CHARLES,

I thought I had lived long enough in this world and had seen so many strange things that I could not wonder at any event ; however I find I am wrong For great is my astonishment Oh Blood Oh Blood ! Bergami coming over to swear he never had any connection with the Queen. If he should swear to that purpose, It will give me infinite pleasure, for it will prove to what an excessive extent Virtue and forbearance can be carryed. For I am most positive that Bergami and the Queen have Lain undressed in one bed together, what excessive virtue and forbearance must it have been, not to have done anything but sleep quietly together—I would have sent you *more game*, but I myself have shott but one brace, and all I have had, has been sent me by farmers whom I allow to shoot, and the supply has been but scanty—I am afraid the Queen's business will not pass over without a *Blow up* in the Country—Tell John ever to think on the Halter I gave him—he is a cleaver and sensible Lad and will prosper in Life, provided he escapes the Gallows to the age of Twenty Five—Shew John this drawing¹ in memento—Bergami attending the Queen in a Bath ; how kind ; Sleeping under the same tent, but *in two beds*, remember that ; how attentive ;

¹ Here again is a sketch of a hanging man, which was a favourite device of Hanger's.

oftentimes seen kissing each other, how friendly ;
 Bathing in a river together, only, to prevent her
 being drowned ; how humane ! Alas, these things
 shew much virtue and forbearance—

God bless you

My dear Chas.

Sept. 10, 1820.

G. HANGER.

Mrs. Hanger's best friendship and will I send
 you some game—

To

Major Chas. James

No. 3 Gloster Place new Road

near Lisson Green

London.

V

[*Undated, but probably written in 1820 or 1821.*]

MY LORD,

This intrusion on your Lordship is great
 I acknowledge, but common justice compells me
 to speak my mind openly on behalf of a friend
 and the only person on earth I call by that sacred
 name. That person is Charles James. I am aston-
 ished at the neglect Government shew to him ;
 do Ministers not know that they *owe their lives*
 to *him* ; had he not made known that damnable
 Plott,¹ they would all have been destroyed ; will

¹ This obviously refers to the Cato Street conspiracy, which
 was discovered, apparently through Captain James's instru-
 mentality, on February 23rd, 1820.

not the conviction of self-preservation dictate to them no gratuitous remuneration to him ; honour, justice, and the feelings of the human heart dictate this and impress it strongly, but my feelings and friendship compell me to it—I submitt this to your Lordship’s consideration humbly claiming your forgiveness for this *bold* intrusion.

I remain with the most perfect
respect your Lordship’s most *devoted*
Servt.

GEORGE HANGER COLERAINE.¹

Rt. Honble. Lord Sidmouth.

&c. &c. &c.

¹ For Hanger’s dislike to using his title, as well as a variety of amusing side-lights on the gay life of the period, see *Little Hydrogen, or the Devil on Two Sticks*, illustrated with coloured plates, and published by Stockdale in 1819. Through the kindness of the Marquess of Sligo I have been enabled to examine a specially interesting copy of this scarce little book, which belonged to the 2nd Marquess, who has added, in autograph, the majority of the names left blank in the text or only adumbrated by synonyms.



CHAPTER XI

LORDS BARRYMORE AND HERTFORD; THE DUKE
OF NORFOLK; SIR JOHN LADE

IN saying something of the other rakes who surrounded the Prince of Wales it is necessary to apply a process of elimination of the most drastic kind, in order to avoid swelling this volume beyond its prescribed limits. For instance, not a few of the famous men who at various times formed part of the Prince's set might well be considered to come within this category, and were they included we should have the bright eyes and Bardolphian nose of Sheridan, the bushy eyebrows of Fox and the immaculate attire of Brummell, continually getting between us and others who never achieved their fame but who were no less, indeed they were often far more, profligate, and about whom it is more interesting to speculate and talk a little than it is about those whose careers have been detailed over and over again, and who have, in spite of their failings, attained to the status of great men.

Again, if we discard the actually famous, we

are confronted with a bewildering array of such as were the Prince's friends at one time or another, and who, from the fact of being this, almost naturally claim inclusion in a gallery of rakes. Not a few of these have been incidentally mentioned in the foregoing pages ; others will occur to the reader without my particularly specifying them ; and in this last chapter I shall confine myself to some desultory notices of three or four who for one reason or another seem to claim the title of rake beyond their compeers and boon companions. They were all gamblers, all hard drinkers, all votaries of Venus, to use a euphemism very popular at that period, and if you can call a knighthood a title, they were all titled. One of them was the 8th Earl of Barrymore, the brother of the ' Hell-gate ' of whose career I have said something in a former volume ; another, the 3rd Marquess of Hertford, known during his earlier intimacy with the Prince as Lord Yarmouth ; yet another, the 11th Duke of Norfolk, ' The Jockey ' as Creevey and many other contemporaries called him ; and the last, the Sir John Lade of driving fame, who survived into the reign of Queen Victoria, a rather pathetic relic of a fuller-blooded and far more feverish period.

Henry Barry, 8th Earl of Barrymore, was born on October 21st, 1770, and succeeded his brother, as we have seen in an earlier volume of this series, on March 6th, 1793. He was as extravagant and

reckless as his elder ; some indeed say that he was even more dissipated—which seems hard to believe possible ; but he was certainly more foul-mouthed, and proficient in every sort of slang and vulgar phraseology.¹ From the fact that he had a club-foot he was known as ‘Cripplegate.’ When he entered into the enjoyment of the Barrymore estates he found them woefully encumbered ; but, notwithstanding this, he set up an establishment in great style in Sackville Street, and also purchased a villa at Palmer’s Green. Before long he had been introduced to the Prince of Wales, and his inherent extravagance and profligacy received an added impetus from this royal association. His manner was aristocratic although he was fond of consorting, as were so many young men of birth at that period, with the lowest of low society ; and there is little doubt that his countess, Anna, daughter of Jeremiah Coghlen, of county Waterford, whom he married in 1795, had much to complain of on the score of his infidelities. He was, on the whole, a worse man than his better known brother, who did possess certain gifts which Cripplegate wholly lacked.

In one thing, however, he excelled, and that was in driving ;² and his high cabriolet or curricule, with a small groom hanging on behind, was a

¹ Gronow.

² He used to keep a few horses in training, and sometimes drove a four-in-hand. He was one of the founders of the Whip Club.

familiar object to the Londoners of his day. He is, indeed, said to have set the fashion in tigers, and the name of the first he ever employed has been preserved—a certain Alexander Lee, son of Henry Lee who kept the once well-known Anti-Gallican Tavern.

An anecdote has been preserved concerning Barrymore's driving activities—activities of which Gronow speaks with enthusiasm. One evening when proceeding up St. James's Street, in his cabriolet, he observed the windows of a house in a bye-street belonging to a certain lady of title lighted up as if for a reception. To turn horse and dash up the street was the work of a moment. A line of carriages setting down guests barred, however, his passage; so he peremptorily told some of the coachmen to give way. One of them refused: "By God, don't you know me? I am the Earl of Barrymore," he wrathfully exclaimed. "You may be the Devil for all I care; I shan't move," retorted the man. Thereupon an altercation ensued; and at last Barrymore became so furious that he hopped from his carriage and began to belabour the offending John with his whip. This the man returned with such interest that the original assailant was at last obliged to retreat into the house, followed by the jeers and derisive yells of the other coachmen.

Raikes tells another story of how being once at an inn at Windsor a discussion arose between

‘ Cripplegate ’ and some officers as to which would be the best way of taking the Castle by assault. A certain Captain Cowper expounded his plan, whereupon Barrymore remarked that it was full of faults, for said he, “ for one thing you have forgotten the water ; ” and immediately threw a glass of that liquid in the officer’s face. It need hardly be said that the result was a furious quarrel, which was only put an end to by the interference of the rest of the company.

Barrymore was, in fact, one of those men who enter easily into disputes, on account of their autocratic bearing and dislike of contradiction. Once he had an altercation at one of the Brighton race-meetings with Humphrey Howarth, M.P. for Evesham, and a duel, luckily unattended by fatal results, was the consequence. He loved to mystify people, and he delighted in singing, which he is said to have done well. He had a favourite song, with a foolish refrain “ Chip, Chow, Cherry Chow, fol-lol-di-riddle how ; ” and on one occasion, being in company with the well-known soldier and traveller, Sir James Alured Clarke, he asked that worthy to give him some details about the Cherry Chow Tribe. Clarke unsuspectingly began to descant about their habits and customs, probably under the impression that some actual tribe was meant but had been given a wrong name. At last, from the general hilarity, he perceived that he had been made the victim of a hoax ; where-

upon he got up, and exclaiming, "My Lord, I have travelled much, but during all my wanderings amongst various savages, I have seen few more barbarous than yourself," withdrew.

Extravagance in living, a passion for cards and other things, resulted in Barrymore being continually exposed to duns ; and the Sheriff's officers were as much at home in his house as were his own servants. Indeed on one occasion, like Honeywood in *The Good Natured Man*, he actually persuaded them to pose as his servants, as Sheridan is also said to have done in a similar instance. This state of things did not for a moment interfere with his lavish entertainments, and one given in Sackville Street on June 21st, 1805, to some three hundred guests, among whom was the Prince of Wales, the Duchess of Gordon, the Duke and Duchess of St. Albans, and many other illustrious people, is said to have been one of the most elaborate of its kind.

In order to pacify some of his more pressing creditors, Barrymore sold Castle Lyon and Buttevant, which he had inherited, to John Anderson, Esq., of Armagh, stipulating for the payment of an annuity of £4000 to himself and £1000 to his wife.

At last, for some reason,¹ he lost the favour of

¹ It may have been owing to the circumstance recorded by Gronow : calling one day at Carlton House and being ushered into the Prince's private room, he placed his hat on a chair, whereupon the Prince observed sarcastically, "My Lord, a well-

the Prince; many did when their purses were empty; but his wife's sister having married the Duc de Castries he received help from that source, as his £4000 was never enough for his constant and lavish expenditure. After the Restoration of the French monarchy in 1815, de Castries offered Barrymore and his Countess a home in his residence in the Faubourg St. Germain; and here he lived in comparative quiet and seclusion, until a fit of apoplexy ended his life on December 18th, 1823. His Countess survived him for nine years, and at her death, on May 6th, 1832, the poor of Paris lost a charitable benefactress.

The other Barrymore brother, Augustus (1773-1818) was equally dissipated, although being in holy orders and always poor he had less opportunity of exhibiting his failings. He was known as 'Newgate,' on the *lucus a non lucendo* principle, that prison being the only one in England in which he is said *not* to have been incarcerated at one time or another. His sister, Caroline, owing to the flow and vigour of her language, shared in the family nomenclature, and was known as 'Billingsgate.'

The 11th Duke of Norfolk died in 1815, so that he only saw a few years of the Regency, and

bred man places his hat under his arm on entering a room, and on his head when out of doors." A similar rebuke to that famous one administered to Brummell with regard to his snuff-box.

although not a stranger to the Pavilion at Brighton, may rather be regarded as one of the Prince's earlier set of friends. He was born in 1746, and succeeded to the dukedom just forty years later. He has been described by a contemporary as "a very fat man plainly dressed in a grey coat with black buttons," and thus one visualises this head of the historic house of Howard, going about London very much *en bourgeois*, a picture supported by Sir Nathaniel Wraxall's memory of him. "His person," says that writer, "large, muscular and clumsy, was destitute of grace and dignity, though he possessed much dignity. He might indeed have been mistaken for a grazier or a butcher, by his dress and appearance, but intelligence was marked in his features which were, likewise, expressive of frankness and sincerity. At a time when men of every description wore hair powder and a cue, he had the courage to cut his hair short, and to renounce powder which he never used except when going to Court." At a later period, towards the end of his life, he wore immense whiskers, which, says a writer in *The Gentleman's Magazine*, overgrew his cheeks to such an extent as to give "a most uncouth appearance to his countenance."

Like so many of his contemporaries he was a hard drinker, indeed in his case it was an hereditary failing, and even in his latter years he could generally be relied on for seeing most men under



'THE JOCKEY OF NORFOLK.'

(face p. 222)

the table.¹ His friendship with the Prince had begun from a community of tastes as well as from political motives, but after a time it cooled off. However, the Duke was a not infrequent guest at the Pavilion, whither he drove over, in his well-known equipage with outriders, from Arundel—one prince, for he was little less, visiting another. The last occasion he did this has become almost historic.

The Prince of Wales was anxious for some reason that the Duke should stay at the Pavilion. This the old man refused to do, but agreed to dine there. The Royal host with a number of other friends drank deep that night, and seem to have done their best to reduce the ducal guest to unconsciousness. However, for a time he withstood all assaults, and valiantly drank bumper for bumper with every one who took wine with him. Nothing seemed able to affect his strong head, until the Prince, after a variety of wines had been consumed, called for bumpers of brandy. The Duke's glass was filled, and he tossed off the contents. "And now," says he, "I will have my carriage." He saw a trap had been laid for him, and resented it. His carriage was called, and staggering into it, he forthwith fell fast asleep. But instead of proceeding to Arundel, the equipage was driven round and round

¹ In *The Times* for February 17th, 1794, may be read a paragraph running thus: "The Duke of Norfolk has just been attacked by hydrophobia, and cannot bear the sight of water; his doctors have therefore prescribed wine."

the Pavilion grounds, what time the Prince and the remainder of the party stood on the steps and enjoyed their triumph. At last the carriage was stopped, and the Duke, now utterly unconscious, was lifted out, and put to bed. The next morning he awoke to find that the Prince had had his way ; and leaving the place he had vowed never to sleep in, he swore he would not enter it again—and he never did.

The Duke had at one time been on very friendly terms with Madame de Pompadour, and Gronow tells an amusing story of a present once made him by that famous lady, in the shape of a tureen of solid gold, exactly similar to one she herself possessed but whose uses were anything but culinary. The feelings of the Duke may be imagined when at a great dinner at Norfolk House he observed this piece of plate, identical with the one he had seen in the favourite's dressing-room in Paris, solemnly brought in filled with soup!

Creevey has many stories to tell of 'The Jockey,' who was so essentially a nobleman of his period—a period when women and wine occupied the attention of those who turned to more serious matters as a *délassement* from what were to them the really important things of life.

Of such the third Marquess of Hertford was another outstanding type. George, Prince of Wales, had a double association with the Seymours, for, as we have seen, he was for long *au mieux* with the

Marchioness of Hertford, wife of the second Marquess, and therefore mother of the Lord Yarmouth—or ‘Red Herrings,’ as he was called—who became notorious as the third Marquess and famous as the partial prototype of the Lord Steyne of *Vanity Fair*. The Lady Hertford referred to (Isabella Anne Ingram, daughter of Charles, Viscount Irvine) was the Marquess’s second wife, whom he married in 1776, Lord Yarmouth being born in the following year. As the second Marquess of Hertford did not die till 1822, his heir during the whole of the Regency was known as Lord Yarmouth. I have had occasion in an earlier chapter to speak of the Prince’s relations with Lady Hertford, and I have also referred to the famous ‘Red Herring’ story.

The third Marquess was educated at St. Mary’s Hall, Oxford, and in 1797 became member of Parliament for Oxford, which place he continued to represent till 1802, when he exchanged it for Lisburne, for which borough he sat in the latter year, in 1806, and from 1807 to 1812. He was made Vice-Chamberlain of the Household in 1812, as well as a Privy Councillor, while he represented Antrim from 1812 to 1818, and Camelford from 1820 to 1822. Indeed he possessed much Parliamentary interest, Creevey asserting that he owed his blue ribbon (which he obtained in November, 1822) to his having purchased four seats in Parliament since his father’s death, and to his avowed

intention of dealing still more largely in the same commodity. Indeed there is much evidence to prove his ownership of certain of those rotten boroughs, such as Aldborough and Orford, which the Reform Bill was to extinguish.

In 1827 he carried the Garter to the Emperor Nicholas I. of Russia, for which purpose he was created an Ambassador Extraordinary. As we have seen in the volume dealing with 'Old Q,' he married that remarkable nobleman's putative child, Maria Fagniani, in May, 1798.

It has been asserted that the very fact of a friendship with George, Prince of Wales, was sufficient to stamp a man as a rake endowed with all the vices of which the royal luminary was an exponent. There is an old proverb to the effect that one cannot touch pitch without being defiled, and there is no doubt a good deal in the accusation that the example and influence of one who occupied so prominent a position in society was likely to have a detrimental effect on the morals of his associates. But at the same time those who consorted with the heir-apparent did so chiefly, I believe, because his way of life agreed with their own, and they were glad enough to commit their extravagances and, if the word be not too severe, their enormities, under the *ægis* of one who did it still more systematically. Indeed, not a few of the old *habitués* of Carlton House and the Pavilion had little to learn in rakishness from the

Prince : they had, on the contrary, often enough been his mentors ; and thus their vices reacted on each other, until it would have been difficult to say, in many instances, which was the instructor and which the pupil.

When Thackeray drew his portrait of the Marquess of Steyne, the reputation of Lord Hertford was notorious ; and we may take the figure of fiction as being, within its limits, a very fair resemblance to the figure of fact. It is thus hardly necessary to accumulate details of Lord Hertford's career in order to show that he is an appropriate figure in any gallery of rakes. Mills, in his *D'Horsay, or the Follies of the Day*, gives us a portrait of the voluptuary in his old age, and in a certain chapter in that work, which is sometimes found wanting, he exhibits a picture of a profligate whose powers were then incapable of keeping pace with his sensual instincts.

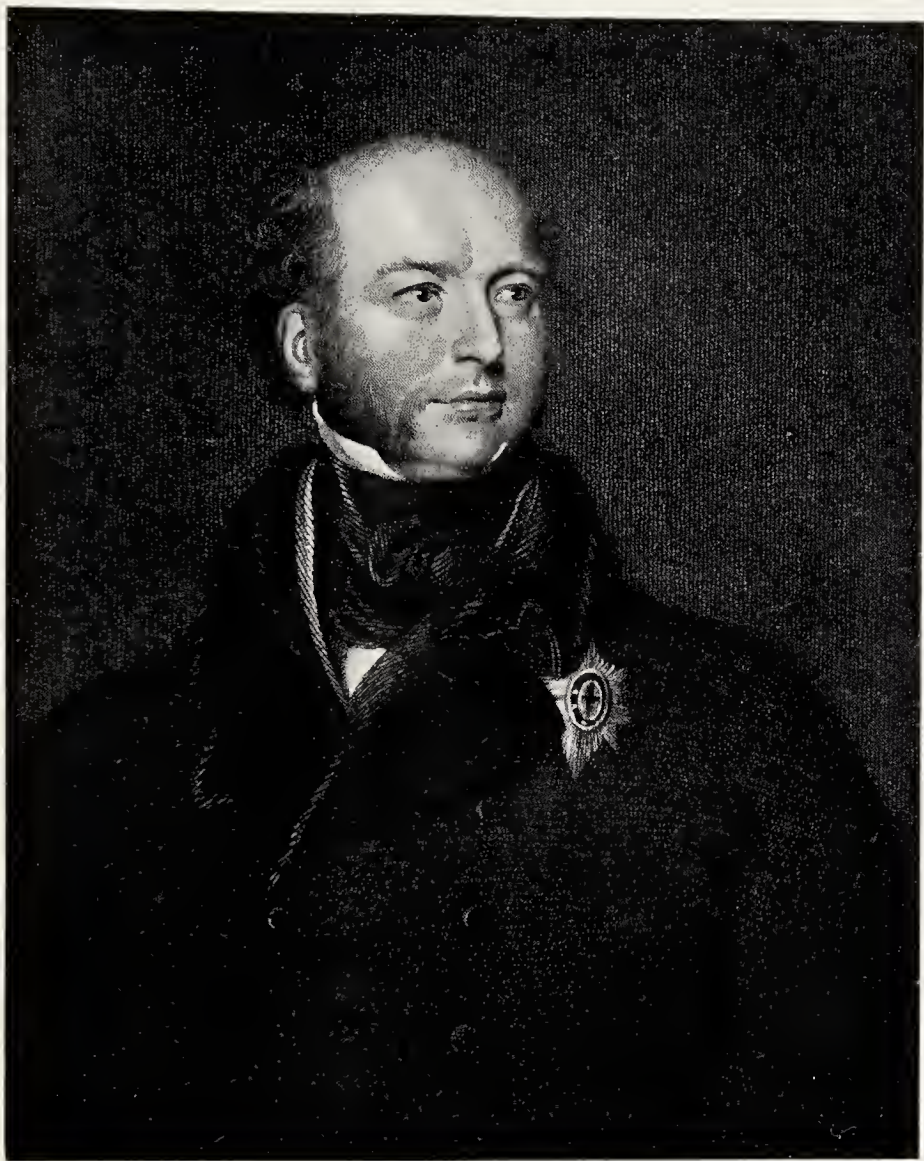
The Regent was fond of staying with Lord Hertford, indeed his house and one or two others were the only ones the Prince visited when he began to seclude himself from the public gaze. It was at one of the Marquess's seats, Sudborn Hall in Suffolk, that he was passing a few days when he was sent for on account of the illness of the Princess Charlotte. Hertford was, too, one of his companions on those aquatic excursions from Brighton, in which he indulged on occasion. The Prince was not a great sailor, however, and once

Yarmouth (as Hertford then was) laid a wager with Sir Edward Nagle,¹ that the Prince would not sleep one night at sea. This came to the royal ears, whereupon the Prince, who delighted in getting the better even of his friends, remained on board for three or four nights, probably at some inconvenience to himself, but with the satisfaction that he had been able to indulge that petty spite which was one of his characteristics. The terms of the wager were £100 for every night the Prince slept at sea ; and Yarmouth complained bitterly that he had been unfairly dealt with, and that the Prince ought not to have been made acquainted with the bet.

Lord Yarmouth's name was well known in Paris, although, of course, he is not to be confounded with his successor, Lord Henry Seymour, the 'Milord Arsouille' of a thousand Parisian stories, and he once had the unpleasant experience when in France of being detained by Napoleon as a prisoner of war at Verdun. There he is said to have lightened the rigours of his detention by playing havoc with the hearts of too susceptible local ladies, as well as to have gambled with such success as, on one occasion, to have won no less than £12,000 at a gaming house in the town.

He outlived the Prince with whom he had been

¹ Admiral Nagle, a bold, weather-beaten tar, but a perfect gentleman, and a great favourite of George IV. who once played an amusing trick on him by having one of his own horses painted to resemble another animal. See Gronow's account of the incident.



THE 3RD MARQUESS OF HERTFORD.

(*face p. 228*)

so intimate by twelve years, dying at old Dorchester House, Park Lane, on March 1st, 1842. Although but sixty-five years of age, he had become, in consequence of the life he had led, prematurely old, and his speech during his latter days is said to have been almost unintelligible. At his death his valet was accused of having robbed him right and left; but after being tried, the man was acquitted, being able to show that what he was supposed to have purloined had been, in effect, given him by a master who may easily have had his reasons for propitiating one likely to know many a strange secret.

Among the less illustrious friends of the Prince of Wales was Sir John Lade, famous as a whip (he once drove a four-in-hand round Tattersall's yard at Hyde Park Corner) and as the husband of Letty Lade, who was equally famous for her command of fuliginous language—'He swears like Letty Lade,' said the Prince on one occasion, of a man whose manner of speech was equally unrestrained.

Lade's ancestors, for he came of an old family, had long been settled at Warbleton, in Sussex, and the baronetcy had come to them in 1730. The title had, however, become extinct soon after (in 1747) by the death of the then Sir John, who left his property to a cousin, one John Inskipp. The latter promptly assumed the name of Lade, indeed it may have been a condition of his inherit-

ing, but of this I am not certain, and, obtaining a fresh baronetcy in 1758, married, and had a son who was the Sir John Lade of the Regency. One of young Lade's guardians was no other than Thrale, the well-known brewer, and friend of Dr. Johnson who was thus often brought in contact with the youth. On one occasion the latter asked Johnson if he would advise him to marry? Upon which the Doctor replied, "Sir, I would advise no man to marry who is not likely to propagate understanding."

Undeterred by this blunt and significant answer young Lade did marry, his choice falling on a girl of low origin named Smith, who had been born in Lewknor Lane, had been a servant at a house in Broad Street, St. Giles', and who is said further to have had some more or less intimate connection with the notorious John Rann, the highwayman—'Sixteen String Jack' as he was called—and with whom she was certainly seen when he was eventually hanged at Tyburn. She was a smart, flashy, bold type of woman who had once captivated the Duke of York, as famous with the whip and ribbons as her husband, and who was accustomed to follow the Windsor Hunt with all the skill and energy of an Amazon. It was, indeed, on one of these occasions that she first attracted the notice of the Prince by the daring of her horsemanship. She was, as a matter of fact, more manly in her tastes and habits than many men,

and her riding and driving feats (she once challenged another lady to drive a four-in-hand over an eight-mile course, in a given time, for five hundred guineas) were the talk and wonder of the town. Like her husband, she was much more at home in the stable than in the drawing-room; but, as with many others of her calibre, she had an itch to be in society. For this purpose, being at Brighton at the time, she persuaded the easy-going Prince to dance with her at a public assembly; whereupon the Duchess of Rutland, Lady Elizabeth Luttrell, Lady Charlotte Bertie, and other high-born and exclusive dames, immediately left the room, and the next day shook the dust of democratic Brighton from their feet.

Lade himself seems at one time to have had money and to have kept some remarkably fine horses. Lord Barrymore (Hellgate) on one occasion purchased from him a team of greys that were the admiration of everyone; and we hear of Charles James Fox, who owed money all round, being indebted to him. The story goes that Fox called on him one day with the intention of paying the money, which he regarded as a debt of honour; but upon Lade's sitting down and making a note as to the interest due, Fox exclaimed, "As you are a trading money-lender, I will pay you later on," and walked off.

Sir John was one of those who made things hum at Brighton during the frequent sojourns there of

the Prince and his set ; and one of his exploits is thus recorded in a newspaper, under date of October 10th, 1795.

“ A curious circumstance occurred at Brighton on Monday. Sir John Lade, for a trifling wager, undertook to carry Lord Cholmondeley on his back, from opposite the Pavilion twice round the Steyne. Several ladies attended to be spectators of this extraordinary feat of the dwarf carrying the giant. When his Lordship declared himself ready, Sir John desired him to strip. ‘ Strip ! ’ exclaimed the other ; ‘ why, surely you promised to carry me in my clothes.’ ‘ By no means,’ replied the Baronet ; ‘ I engaged to carry you, but not an inch of clothes. So therefore, my Lord, make ready, and let us not disappoint the ladies.’ After much laughable altercation, it was at length decided that Sir John had won his wager, the Peer declining to exhibit himself *in puris naturalibus*.” Needless to say the caricaturists of the time pounced on this incident, as they did on most things concerning the Prince of Wales and his merry men, and it was made the subject of various pictorial lampoons of more or less indecency.

While Sir John Lade amused the Prince by such jests, and excited in him an emulation in driving which his Royal Highness came in time nearly to rival (for George was a notable Jehu, among his other accomplishments), Lady Lade was instrumental in providing her illustrious friend with

other diversions ; and it was, as we have seen, through her instrumentality that Elizabeth Harrington had been procured for him.

Notwithstanding, or perhaps because of, Lade's intimacy with the Prince, he did not escape the fate of many of those gay reckless beings who spent their money royally and then had plenty of opportunities to regret their improvidence, in a royal prison for debtors. In 1814 he was committed to the King's Bench, and when he at length emerged from that prison he appears to have been absolutely penniless. The Prince, to do him justice, was not ungrateful for the many services the Lades had rendered him, and he allowed Sir John and his lady £300 a year. On George IV.'s death this was continued by William IV., but when Queen Victoria came to the throne it was supposed that under so entirely different a *régime* from what had hitherto obtained, the annuity would be discontinued. When, however, the matter was laid before the young Queen, she asked whether Sir John was not an old man without other resources, and being told that that was the case, she ordered the money to be paid till his death. Lade was then (1837) seventy-eight and alone, for Lady Lade had died in 1825,¹ and he only lived a year after experiencing the generosity of a sovereign who was in every respect the antithesis of the master he had so long amused. His niece, Miss

¹ On May 5th, at Egham.

Goulding, as readers of the volume in this series, 'Old Q' and *The Earl of Barrymore*, will remember, married the latter under curious circumstances, so that Lade was linked by relationship to one of the most notorious of those rakes of the 18th and early 19th century with whom he was otherwise identified. He comes down to us, apart from such profligate propensities as he possessed in common with most of the Prince's friends, as a consummate whip whose most famous exploit was driving the off-wheels of his phaeton over a sixpence. Many men have been remembered for doing less, and more harmful things ; but it is not a great record !

Such was the Prince and such the men whom he collected round him. Others could have been mentioned—Lord Cholmondeley, who was one of those that set up that faro bank at Brooks's which, according to Raikes, ruined half the town ; Prince Boothby, who committed suicide because dressing and undressing had become such a bore ; Ball Hughes, who carried off the Mercandotti under the very eyes of her 'protector' Lord Fife ; Brummell, the *arbiter elegantiarum* of his day, who cut the Prince and died mad and in exile ; Alvanley, the wit and gourmet ; and Captain Morris, the singer of Pall Mall's charms. The list is some hundreds long. For anyone who had money or wit, an eye for a pretty woman or an ear for a good song, found a way to that royal magnet

whose taste in such things was consummate and who, with the easy nonchalance of selfish power, used such gifts for his own amusement and not infrequently forgot those who had ministered to his pleasures.¹ Voltaire says somewhere that Frederick the Great once remarked to him that Kings use men as they do oranges; they suck them and then throw away the skin. The philosopher took the hint and retired to Ferney. Many of those who haunted Carlton House and the Pavilion would have done well to follow Voltaire's example; but like the traditional moths round the proverbial candle, they preferred to flutter in the flame of royal favour until their wings were irretrievably singed.

¹ On the other hand he sent £200 to Beethoven when in distress, and £100 to O'Keefe; while many more could witness to his generosity on occasion.

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